

The image shows a dark green, textured book cover. In the center, there is a large, vertically oriented oval medallion. Inside this medallion, the text "L. & CO. LÉ" is embossed in a serif font. The cover is decorated with intricate floral and leaf patterns, possibly created through a blind-tooled or embossed technique. These patterns include clusters of small flowers, larger five-petaled flowers, and various leaf shapes, some of which are arranged in a circular or wreath-like fashion around the central medallion. The overall appearance is that of a classic, possibly leather-bound or high-quality cloth-bound book cover.

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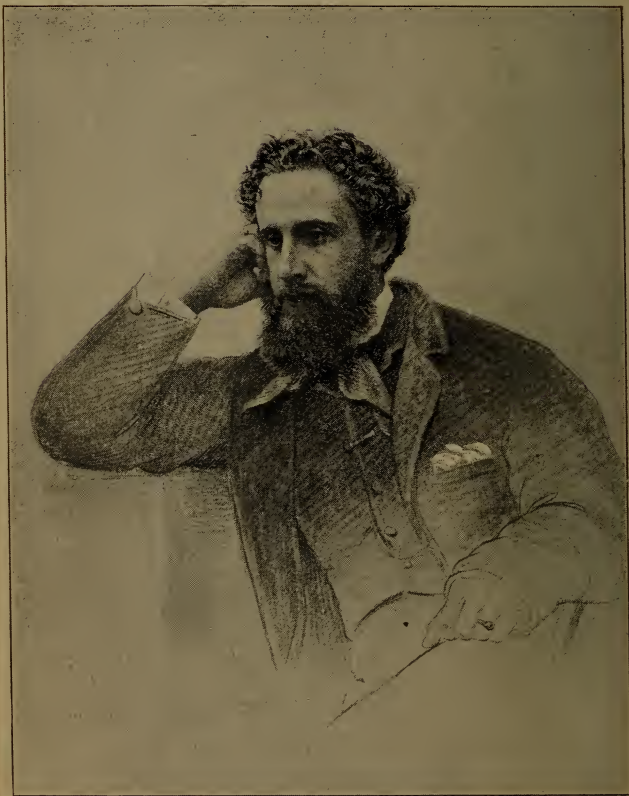












OWEN MEREDITH.





# LUCILE

BY

OWEN MEREDITH

*E. R. B. Hyatt.*

CHICAGO

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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1900

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# DEDICATION.

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## TO MY FATHER.

I dedicate to you a work, which is submitted to the public with a diffidence and hesitation proportioned to the novelty of the effort it represents. For in this poem I have abandoned those forms of verse with which I had most familiarized my thoughts, and have endeavored to follow a path on which I could discover no footprints before me, either to guide or to warn.

There is a moment of profound discouragement which succeeds to prolonged effort; when, the labor which has become a habit having ceased, we miss the sustaining sense of its companionship, and stand, with a feeling of strangeness and embarrassment, before the abrupt and naked result. As regards myself in the present instance, the force of all such sensations is increased by the circumstances to which I have referred. And in this moment of discouragement and doubt, my heart instinctively turns to you, from whom it has so often sought, from whom it has never failed to receive, support.

I do not inscribe to you this book because it contains anything that is worthy of the beloved and honored name with which I thus seek to associate it; nor yet because I would avail myself of a vulgar pretext to display in public an affection that is best honored by the silence which it renders sacred.

Feelings only such as those with which, in days when there existed for me no critic less gentle than yourself, I brought to you my childish manuscripts; feelings only such as those which have, in later years, associated with your heart all that has moved or occupied my own—lead me once more to seek assurance from the grasp of that hand which has hitherto been my guide and comfort through the life I owe to you.

And as in childhood, when existence had no toil beyond the day's simple lesson, no ambition beyond the neighboring approval of the night, I brought to you the morning's task for the evening's sanction, so now I bring to you this self-appointed task-work of maturer years; less confident, indeed, of your approval, but not less confident of your love; and anxious only to realize your presence between myself and the public, and to mingle with those severer voices to whose final sentence I submit my work the beloved and gracious accents of your own.

OWEN MEREDITH.

# LUCILE.

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## PART I.

### CANTO I.

#### I.

LETTER FROM THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO  
LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE.

“I hear from Bigorre you are there. I am told  
You are going to marry Miss Darcy. Of old,  
So long since you may have forgotten it now  
(When we parted as friends, soon mere strang-  
ers to grow),

Your last words recorded a pledge—what you  
will—

A promise—the time is now come to fulfill.

The letters I ask you, my lord, to return,  
I desire to receive from your hand. You dis-  
cern

My reasons, which, therefore, I need not ex-  
plain.

The distance to Serchon is short. I remain  
A month in these mountains. Miss Darcy,  
perchance,

Will forego one brief page from the summer  
romance  
Of her courtship, and spare you one day from  
your place  
At her feet, in the light of her fair English  
face.

I desire nothing more, and I trust you will feel  
I desire nothing much.

“Your friend always,  
“LUCILE.”

II.

Now in May Fair, of course,—in the fair  
month of May—

When life is abundant, and busy, and gay;  
When the markets of London are noisy about  
Young ladies, and strawberries,—“only just  
out;”

Fresh strawberries sold under all the house-  
eaves,

And young ladies on sale for the strawberry-  
leaves;

When cards, invitations, and three-corner'd  
notes

Fly about like white butterflies—gay little  
motes

In the sunbeam of fashion; and even Blue  
Books

Take a heavy-wing'd flight, and grow busy as  
rooks;

And the postman (that Genius, indifferent and  
stern,

Who shakes out even-handed to all, from his  
urn,  
Those lots which so often decide if our day  
Shall be fretful and anxious, or joyous and  
gay)  
Brings, each morning, more letters of one sort  
or other  
Than Cadmus, himself, put together, to bother  
The heads of Hellenes;—I say, in the season  
Of Fair May, in May Fair, there can be no  
reason  
Why, when quietly munching your dry toast  
and butter,  
Your nerves should be suddenly thrown in a  
flutter  
At the sight of a neat little letter, address'd  
In a woman's handwriting, containing, half-  
guess'd,  
An odor of violets faint as the Spring,  
And coquettishly seal'd with a small signet-  
ring,  
But in Autumn, the season of somber reflec-  
tion,  
When a damp day, at breakfast, begins with  
dejection;  
Far from London and Paris, and ill at one's  
ease,  
Away in the heart of the blue Pyrenees,  
Where a call from the doctor, a stroll to the  
bath,  
A ride through the hills on a hack like a lath,  
A cigar, a French novel, a tedious flirtation,  
Are all a man finds for his day's occupation,  
The whole case, believe me, is totally changed,





And Lord Alfred, whilst moodily gazing  
 around it,  
 To himself more than once (vex'd in soul)  
 sigh'd . . . . . "Confound it!"

## IV.

What the thoughts were which led to this bad  
 interjection,  
 Sir, or Madam, I leave to your future detection:  
 For whatever they were, they were burst in  
 upon,  
 As the door was burst through, by my lord's  
 Cousin John.

COUSIN JOHN.

A fool, Alfred, a fool, a most motley fool!

LORD ALFRED.

Who?

JOHN.

The man who has anything better to do;  
 And yet so far forgets himself, so far degrades  
 His position as Man, to this worst of all trades,  
 Which even a well-brought-up ape were above,  
 To travel about with a woman in love,—  
 Unless she's in love with himself.

ALFRED.

Indeed! why

Are you here then, dear Jack?

JOHN.

Can't you guess it?

ALFRED.

Not I.

JOHN.

Because I have nothing that's better to do.  
I had rather be bored, my dear Alfred, by you,  
On the whole (I must own), than be bored by  
myself.

That perverse, imperturbable, golden hair'd  
elf—

Your Will-o-the-wisp—that has led you and me  
Such a dance through these hills—

ALFRED.

Who, Matilda?

JOHN.

Yes! she,

Of course! who but she could contrive so to  
keep

One's eyes, and one's feet too, from falling  
asleep

For even one half-hour of the long twenty-  
four?

ALFRED.

What's the matter?

JOHN.

Why, she is—a matter, the more  
I consider about it, the more it demands

An attention it does not deserve; and expands  
Beyond the dimensions which ev'n crinoline,

When possess'd by a fair face, and saucy  
Eighteen,

Is entitled to take in this very small star,  
Already too crowded, as I think, by far.

You read Malthus and Sadler?

ALFRED.

Of course.

JOHN.

To what use,  
 When you countenance, calmly, such mon-  
 strous abuse  
 Of one mere human creature's legitimate space  
 In this world? Mars, Apollo, Virorum! the  
 case  
 Wholly passes my patience.

ALFRED.

My own is worse tried.

JOHN.

Yours, Alfred?

ALFRED.

Read this, if you doubt, and decide.

JOHN (reading the letter).

"I hear from Bigorre you are there. I am told  
 You are going to marry Miss Darcy. Of  
 old—"

What is this?

ALFRED.

Read it on the end, and you'll know.

JOHN (continues reading).

"When we parted, your last words recorded a  
 vow—

What you will" . . . . .

Hang it! this smells all over, I swear,  
 Of adventures and violets. Was it your hair  
 You promised a lock of?

ALFRED.

Read on. You'll discern.

JOHN (continues).

“Those letters I ask you, my lord, to return.”  
 Humph! . . . Letters! . . . the matter is  
 worse than I guess'd;  
 I have my misgivings—

ALFRED.

Well, read out the rest,  
 And advise.

JOHN.

Eh? . . . Where was I?

(continues).

“Miss Darcy, perchance,  
 Will forego one brief page from the summer  
 romance  
 Of her courtship.” . . .

Egad! a romance, for my part,  
 I'd forego every page of, and not break my  
 heart!

ALFRED.

Continue?

JOHN (reading).

“And spare you one day from your  
 place at her feet.” . . .

Pray forgive me the passing grimace.  
 I wish you had my place!

(reads.)

“I trust you will feel

I desire nothing much. Your friend" . . .  
 Bless me! "Lucile?"  
 The Comtesse de Nevers?

ALFRED.

Yes.

JOHN.

What will you do?

ALFRED.

You ask me just what I would rather ask you.

JOHN.

You can't go.

ALFRED.

I must.

JOHN.

And Matilda.

ALFRED

Oh, that

You must manage!

JOHN.

Must I? I decline it, though, flat.  
 In an hour the horses will be at the door,  
 And Matilda is now in her habit. Before  
 I have finished my breakfast, of course I  
 receive  
 A message for "dear Cousin John!" . . . I  
 must leave  
 At the jeweler's the bracelet which you broke  
 last night,

I must call for the music. "Dear Alfred is right:  
 The black shawl looks best: will I change it?  
 Of course  
 I can just stop, in passing, to order the horse.  
 Then Beau has the mumps, or St. Hubert  
 knows what;  
 Will I see the dog-doctor?" Hang Beau! I  
 will not.

ALFRED.

Tush, tush! this is serious.

JOHN.

It is.

ALFRED.

Very well.

You must think—

JOHN.

What excuse will you make, tho'?

ALFRED.

Oh, tell

Mrs. Darcy that . . . lend me your wits, Jack!  
 . . . the deuce!

Can you not stretch your genius to fit a friend's  
 use?

Excuses are clothes which, when ask'd un-  
 awares,

Good Breeding to Naked Necessity spares,  
 You must have a whole wardrobe, no doubt.

JOHN.  
My dear fellow,  
Matilda is jealous, you know, as Othello.

ALFRED.  
You joke.

JOHN.  
I am serious. Why go to Serchon?

ALFRED.  
Don't ask me. I have not a choice, my dear  
John.  
Besides, shall I own a strange sort of desire,  
Before I extinguish forever the fire  
Of youth and romance in whose shadowy light  
Hope whisper'd her first fairy tales, to excite  
The last spark, till it rise, and fade far in that  
dawn  
Of my days where the twilights of life were  
first drawn  
By the rosy, reluctant auroras of Love:  
In short, from the dead Past the gravestone  
to move;  
Of the years long departed forever to take  
One last look, one final farewell; to awake  
The Heroic of youth from the Hades of joy,  
And once more be, though but for an hour,  
Jack—a boy!

JOHN.  
You had better go hang yourself.

ALFRED.  
No! were it but

To make sure that the Past from the Future is  
 shut,  
 It were worth the step back. Do you think we  
 should live  
 With the living so lightly, and learn to survive  
 That wild moment in which to the grave and  
 its gloom  
 We consign'd our heart's best, if the doors of  
 the tomb  
 Were not lock'd with a key which Fate keeps  
 for our sake?  
 If the dead could return, or the corpses awake?

JOHN.

Nonsense!

ALFRED.

Not wholly. The man who gets up  
 A fill'd guest from the banquet, and drains off  
 his cup,  
 Sees the last lamp extinguish'd with cheer-  
 fulness, goes  
 Well contented to bed, and enjoys its repose.  
 But he who hath supp'd at the tables of kings,  
 And yet starved in the sight of luxurious  
 things;  
 Who hath watch'd the wine flow, by himself  
 but half tasted;  
 Heard the music, and yet miss'd the tune; who  
 hath wasted  
 One part of life's grand possibilities;—friend,  
 That man will bear with him, be sure, to the  
 end  
 A blighted experience, a rancor within:  
 You may call it a virtue, I call it a sin.



JOHN.

I see you remember the cynical story  
 Of that wicked old piece of Experience—a  
     hoary  
 Lothario, whom dying, the priest by his bed  
 (Knowing well the unprincipled life he had  
     led,  
 And observing, with no small amount of sur-  
     prise,  
 Resignation and calm in the old sinner's eyes)  
 Ask'd if he had nothing that weigh'd on his  
     mind:  
 "Well, . . . no," . . . says Lothario, "I think  
     not. I find,  
 On reviewing my life, which in most things  
     was pleasant,  
 I never neglected, when once it was present,  
 An occasion of pleasing myself. On the whole,  
 I have naught to regret;" . . . and so, smil-  
     ing, his soul  
 Took its flight from this world.

ALFRED.

Well, Regret or Remorse,  
 Which is best?

JOHN.

Why, Regret.

ALFRED.

No, Remorse, Jack, of course;  
 For the one is related, be sure, to the other.  
 Regret is a spiteful old maid: but her brother,  
 Remorse, though a widower certainly, yet

Has been wed to young Pleasure. Dear Jack,  
hang Regret!

JOHN.

Bref! you mean, then, to go?

ALFRED.

Bref! I do.

JOHN.

One word . . . stay!  
Are you really in love with Matilda?

ALFRED.

Love, eh?

What a question! Of course.

JOHN.

Were you really in love  
With Madame de Nevers?

ALFRED.

What, Lucile? No, by Jove,  
Never really.

JOHN.

She's pretty?

ALFRED.

Decidedly so.

At least, so she was, some ten summers ago.  
As soft, and as sallow as Autumn—with hair  
Neither black, nor yet brown, but that tinge  
which the air

Takes at eve in September, when night lingers  
lone

Through a vineyard, from beams of a slow  
 setting sun.  
 Eyes—the wistful gazelle's; the fine foot of  
 a fairy;  
 And a hand fit a fay's wand to wave,—white  
 and airy;  
 A voice soft and sweet as a tune that one  
 knows,  
 Something in her there was, set you thinking  
 of those  
 Strange backgrounds of Raphael . . . that  
 hectic and deep  
 Brief twilight in which southern suns fall  
 asleep.

JOHN.

Coquette?

ALFRED.

Not at all. 'Twas her one fault. Not she!  
 I had loved her the better, had she less loved  
 me.  
 The heart of a man's like that delicate weed  
 Which requires to be trampled on, boldly  
 indeed,  
 Ere it give forth the fragrance you wish to  
 extract.  
 'Tis a simile, trust me, if not new, exact.

JOHN.

Women change so.

ALFRED.

Of course.

JOHN.

And, unless rumor errs,

I believe that, last year, the Comtesse de  
 Nevers\*  
 Was at Baden the rage—held an absolute court  
 Of devoted adorers, and really made sport  
 Of her subjects.

ALFRED.

Indeed!

JOHN.

When she broke off with you  
 Her engagement, her heart did not break  
 with it?

ALFRED.

Pooh!

Pray would you have had her dress always in  
 black,  
 And shut herself up in a convent, dear Jack?  
 Besides, 'twas my fault the engagement was  
 broken.

JOHN.

Most likely. How was it?

\*O Shakespeare! how could'st thou ask "What's in a  
 name?"

'Tis the devil's in it, when a bard has to frame  
 English rhymes for alliance with names that are  
 French:

And in these rhymes of mine, well I know that I trench  
 All too far on that license which critics refuse,  
 With just right, to accord to a well-brought-up Muse.  
 Yet, tho' faulty the union, in many a line,

'Twixt my British-born verse and my French heroine,  
 Since, however auspiciously wedded they be,  
 There is many a pair, that yet cannot agree,  
 Your forgiveness for this pair, the author invites,  
 Whom necessity, not inclination, unites.

ALFRED.

The tale is soon spoken.

She bored me. I show'd it. She saw it.

What next?

She reproach'd. I retorted. Of course she was vex'd.

I was vex'd that she was so. She sulk'd. So did I.

If I ask'd her to sing, she look'd ready to cry. I was contrite, submissive. She soften'd. I harden'd.

At noon I was banish'd. At eve I was pardon'd.

She said I had no heart. I said she had no reason.

I swore she talk'd nonsense. She sobb'd I talk'd treason.

In short, my dear fellow, 'twas time, as you see, Things should come to a crisis, and finish.

'Twas she

By whom to that crisis the matter was brought. She released me. I linger'd. I linger'd, she thought,

With too sullen an aspect. This gave me, of course,

The occasion to fly in a rage, mount my horse, And declare myself uncomprehended. And so We parted. The rest of the story you know.

JOHN.

No, indeed.

ALFRED.

Well, we parted. Of course we could not Continue to meet, as before, in one spot.

You conceive it was awkward? Even Don  
Ferdinando

Can do, you remember, no more than he can do.  
I think that I acted exceedingly well,  
Considering the time when this rupture befell,  
For Paris was charming just then. It deranged  
All my plans for the winter. I ask'd to be  
changed—

Wrote for Naples, then vacant—obtain'd it—  
and so

Join'd my new post at once; but scarce reach'd  
it, when lo!

My first news from Paris informs me Lucile  
Is ill, and in danger. Conceive what I feel.  
I fly back. I find her recover'd, but yet  
Looking pale. I am seized with a contrite re-  
gret;

I ask to renew the engagement.

JOHN.

And she?

ALFRED.

Reflects, but declines. We part, swearing to  
be

Friends ever, friends only. All that sort of  
thing!

We each keep our letters . . . a portrait . . .  
a ring.

With a pledge to return them whenever the  
one

Or the other shall call for them back.

JOHN.

Pray go on.

ALFRED.

My story is finish'd. Of course I enjoin  
On Lucile all those thousand good maxims we  
coin

To supply the grim deficit found in our days,  
When love leaves them bankrupt. I preach.  
She obeys.

She goes out in the world; takes to dancing  
once more—

A pleasure she rarely indulged in before.  
I go back to my post, and collect (I must own  
'Tis a taste I had never before, my dear John)  
Antiques and small Elzevirs. Heigho! now,  
Jack.

You know all.

JOHN (after a pause).

You are really resolved to go back?

ALFRED.

Eh, where?

JOHN.

To that worst of all places—the past.  
You remember Lot's wife?

ALFRED.

'Twas a promise when last  
We parted. My honor is pledged to it?

JOHN.

Well,  
What is it you wish me to do?

ALFRED.

You must tell

Matilda, I meant to have call'd—to leave word—  
To explain—but the time was so pressing—

JOHN.

My lord,

Your lordship's obedient! I really can't do . . .

ALFRED.

You wish then to break off my marriage?

JOHN.

No, no!

But, indeed, I can't see why yourself you need  
take  
These letters.

ALFRED.

Not see? would you have me, then, break  
A promise my honor is pledged to?

JOHN (humming).

“Off, off  
And away! said the stranger” . . .

ALFRED.

Oh, good! oh, you scoff!

JOHN.

At what, my dear Alfred?

ALFRED.

At all things!

JOHN.

Indeed?



## ALFRED.

Yes; I see that your heart is as dry as a reed;  
 That the dew of your youth is rubb'd off you;  
 I see  
 You have no feeling left in you, even for me!  
 At honor you jest; you are cold as a stone  
 To the warm voice of friendship. Belief you  
 have none;  
 You have lost faith in all things. You carry a  
 blight  
 About with you everywhere. Yes, at the sight  
 Of such callous indifference, who could be  
 calm?  
 I must leave you at once, Jack, or else the last  
 balm  
 That is left me in Gilead you'll turn into gall.  
 Heartless, cold, unconcern'd . . .

## JOHN.

Have you done? Is that all?  
 Well, then, listen to me! I presume when you  
 you made  
 Up your mind to propose to Miss Darcy, you  
 weigh'd  
 All the drawbacks against the equivalent gains,  
 Ere you finally settled the point. What re-  
 mains  
 But to stick to your choice? You want money:  
 'tis here.  
 A settled position: 'tis yours. A career:  
 You secure it. A wife, young, and pretty as  
 rich,

Whom all men will envy you. Why must you  
itch

To be running away, on the eve of all this,  
To a woman whom never for once did you miss  
All these years since you left her? Who knows  
what may hap?

This letter—to me—is a palpable trap.  
The woman has changed since you knew her.  
Perchance

She yet seeks to renew her youth's broken  
romance,

When women begin to feel youth and their  
beauty

Slip from them, they count it a sort of a duty  
To let nothing else slip away unsecured

Which these, while they lasted, might once  
have procured,

Lucile's a coquette to the end of her fingers,  
I will stake my last farthing. Perhaps the  
wish lingers

To recall the once reckless, indifferent lover  
To the feet he has left; let intrigue now re-  
cover

What truth could not keep. 'Twere a ven-  
geance, no doubt—

A triumph;—but why must you bring it about?  
You are risking the substance of all that you  
schemed

To obtain; and for what? some mad dream you  
have dream'd.

ALFRED.

But there's nothing to risk. You exaggerate,  
Jack,

You mistake. In three days, at the most, I am  
back.

JOHN.

Ay, but how? . . . discontented, unsettled,  
upset,  
Bearing with you a comfortless twinge of re-  
gret;  
Preoccupied, sulky, and likely enough  
To make your betroth'd break off all in a huff.  
Three days, do you say? But in three days who  
knows,  
What may happen? I don't, nor do you, I  
suppose.

v.

Of all the good things in this good world around  
us,  
The one most abundantly furnish'd and found  
us,  
And which for that reason we least care about,  
And can best spare our friends, is good coun-  
sel, no doubt.  
But advice, when 'tis sought from a friend  
(though civility  
May forbid to avow it), means mere liability  
In the bill we already have drawn on Remorse,  
Which we deem that a true friend is bound to  
indorse.  
A mere lecture on debt from that friend is a  
bore.  
Thus, the better his cousin's advice was, the  
more

Alfred Vargrave with angry resentment opposed it.  
 And, having the worst of the contest, he closed it  
 With so firm a resolve his bad ground to maintain,  
 That, sadly perceiving resistance was vain,  
 And argument fruitless, the amiable Jack  
 Came to terms and assisted his cousin to pack  
 A slender valise (the one small condescension  
 Which his final remonstrance obtain'd) whose  
 dimension  
 Excluded large outfits; and, cursing his stars,  
 he  
 Shook hands with his friend and return'd to  
 Miss Darcy.  
 Lord Alfred, when last to the window he turn'd

## VI.

Ere he lock'd up and quitted his chamber, discern'd  
 Matilda ride by, with her cheek beaming bright  
 In what Virgil has call'd, "Youth's purpleal light"  
 (I like the expression, and can't find a better),  
 He sigh'd as he look'd at her. Did he regret her?  
 In her habit and hat, with her glad golden hair,  
 As airy and blithe as a blithe bird in air,  
 And her arch rosy lips, and her eager blue  
 eyes,  
 With her little impertinent look of surprise,

And her round youthful figure, and a fair neck  
below  
The dark drooping feather, as radiant as  
snow,—  
I can only declare, that if I had the chance  
Of passing three days in the exquisite glance  
Of those eyes, or caressing the hand that now  
petted  
That fine English mare, I should much have  
regretted  
Whatever might lose me one little half-hour  
Of a pastime so pleasant, when once in my  
power.  
For, if one drop of milk from the bright Milky  
Way  
Could turn into a woman, 'twould look, I dare  
say,  
Not more fresh than Matilda was looking that  
day.

## VII.

But, whatever the feeling that prompted the  
sigh  
With which Alfred Vargrave now watch'd her  
ride by,  
I can only affirm that, in watching her ride,  
As he turned from the window, he certainly  
sigh'd.

## CANTO II.

## I.

LETTER FROM LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE TO  
THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS.

“BIGORRE, Tuesday.

“Your note, Madam, reach'd me to-day, at  
Bigorre,

And commands (need I add?) my obedience.  
Before

The night I shall be at Serchon—where a line,  
If sent to Duval's, the hotel where I dine,  
Will find me, awaiting your orders. Receive  
My respects.

“Yours sincerely,

“A. VARGRAVE.

“I leave

In an hour.”

## II.

In an hour from the time he wrote this,  
Alfred Vargrave, in tracking a mountain abyss,  
Gave the rein to his steed and his thoughts,  
and pursued,

In pursuing his course through the blue soli-  
tude,

The reflections that journey gave rise to.

And here

(Because, without some such precaution, I fear  
You might fail to distinguish them each from  
the rest

Of the world they belong to; whose captives  
are drest,

As our convicts, precisely the same one and  
 all,  
 While the coat cut for Peter is pass'd on to  
 Paul)  
 I resolve, one by one, when I pick from the  
 mass  
 The persons I want, as before you they pass,  
 To label them broadly in plain black and white  
 On the backs of them. Therefore, whilst yet  
 he's in sight,  
 I first label my hero.

## III.

The age is gone o'er  
 When a man may in all things be all. We have  
 more  
 Painters, poets, musicians, and artists, no doubt,  
 Than the great Cinquecento gave birth to; but  
 out  
 Of a million of mere dilettanti, when, when  
 Will a new Leonardo rise on our ken?  
 He is gone with the age which begat him. Our  
 own  
 Is too vast, and too complex, for one man alone  
 To embody its purpose, and hold it shut close  
 In the palm of his hand. There were giants  
 in those  
 Irreclaimable days; but in these days of ours,  
 In dividing the work, we distribute the powers.  
 Yet a dwarf on a dead giant's shoulders sees  
 more  
 Than the 'live giant's eyesight availed to  
 explore;

And in life's lengthen'd alphabet what used to  
be

To our sires X Y Z is to us A B C.

A Vanini is roasted alive for his pains,  
But a Bacon comes after and picks up his brains.  
A Bruno is angrily seized by the throttle  
And hunted about by thy ghost, Aristotle,  
Till a More or Lavater steps into his place:  
Then the world turns and makes an admiring  
grimace.

Once the men were so great and so few, they  
appear,

Through a distant Olympian atmosphere,  
Like vast Caryatids upholding the age.

Now the men are so many and small, disengage  
One man from the million to mark him, next  
moment

The crowd sweeps him hurriedly out of your  
comment;

And since we seek vainly (to praise in our  
songs)

'Mid our fellows the size which to heroes  
belongs,

We take the whole age for a hero, in want  
Of a better: and still, in its favor, descant  
On the strength and the beauty which, failing  
to find

In any one man, we ascribe to mankind.

#### IV.

Alfred Vargrave was one of those men who  
achieve

So little, because of the much they conceive.



With irresolute finger he knock'd at each one  
 Of the doorways of life, and abided in none.  
 His course, by each star that would cross it,  
     was set,  
 And whatever he did he was sure to regret.  
 That target, discuss'd by the travelers of old,  
 Which to one appear'd argent, to one appear'd  
     gold,  
 To him, ever lingering on Doubt's dizzy mar-  
     gent,  
 Appear'd in one moment both golden and  
     argent.  
 The man who seeks one thing in life, and but  
     one,  
 May hope to achieve it before life be done;  
 But he who seeks all things, wherever he goes,  
 Only reaps from the hopes which around him  
     he sows  
 A harvest of barren regrets. And the worm  
 That crawls on in the dust to the definite term  
 Of its creeping existence, and sees nothing  
     more  
 Than the path it pursues till its creeping be  
     o'er,  
 In its limited vision, is happier far  
 Than the Half-Sage, whose course, fix'd by no  
     friendly star  
 Is by each star distracted in turn, and who  
     knows  
 Each will still be as distant wherever he goes.

## v.

Both brilliant and brittle, both bold and  
     unstable,

Indecisive yet keen, Alfred Vargrave seem'd  
     able  
 To dazzle, but not to illumine mankind.  
 A vigorous, various, versatile mind;  
 A character wavering, fitful, uncertain.  
 As the shadow that shakes o'er a luminous  
     curtain,  
 Vague, fitting, but on it forever impressing  
 The shape of some substance at which you  
     stand guessing:  
 When you said, "All is worthless and weak  
     here," behold!  
 Into sight on a sudden there seem'd to unfold  
 Great outlines of strenuous truth in the man:  
 When you said, "This is genius," the outlines  
     grew wan.  
 And his life, though in all things so gifted and  
     skill'd,  
 Was, at best, but a promise which nothing ful-  
     fill'd.

## VI.

In the budding of youth, ere wild winds can  
     deflower  
 The shut leaves of man's life, round the germ  
     of his power  
 Yet folded, his life had been earnest. Alas!  
 In that life one occasion, one moment, there  
     was  
 When this earnestness might, with the life-sap  
     of youth,  
 Lusty fruitage have borne in his manhood's  
     full growth;

But it found him too soon, when his nature  
was still  
The delicate toy of too pliant a will,  
The boisterous wind of the world to resist.  
Or the frost of the world's wintry wisdom.  
He miss'd  
That occasion, too rathe in its advent.  
Since then  
He had made it a law, in his commerce with  
men,  
That intensity in him, which only left sore  
The heart it disturb'd, to repel and ignore.  
And thus, as some Prince by his subjects  
deposed,  
Whose strength he, by seeking to crush it, dis-  
closed,  
In resigning the power he lack'd power to sup-  
port,  
Turns his back upon courts, with a sneer at the  
court,  
In his converse this man for sel-comfort  
appeal'd  
To a cynic denial of all he conceal'd  
In the instincts and feelings belied by his  
words.  
Words, however, are things: and the man who  
accords  
To his language the license to outrage his soul,  
Is controll'd by the words he disdains to con-  
trol.  
And, therefore, he seem'd in the deeds of each  
day,  
The light code proclaim'd on his lips to obey;

And, the slave of each whim, follow'd willfully  
     aught  
 That perchance fool'd the fancy, or flatter'd  
     the thought.  
 Yet, indeed, deep within him, the spirits of  
     truth,  
 Vast, vague aspirations, the powers of his  
     youth,  
 Lived and breathed, and made moan—stirr'd  
     themselves—strove to start  
 Into deeds—though deposed, in that Hades,  
     his heart.  
 Like those antique Theogonies ruin'd and  
     hurl'd,  
 Under clefts of the hills, which, convulsing the  
     world,  
 Heaved, in earthquake, their heads the rent  
     caverns above,  
 To trouble at times in the light court of Jove  
 All its frivolous gods, with an undefined awe,  
 Of wrong'd rebel powers that own'd not their  
     law.  
 For his sake, I am fain to believe that, if born  
 To some lowlier rank (from the world's languid  
     scorn  
 Secured by the world's stern resistance), where  
     strife,  
 Strife and toil, and not pleasure, gave purpose  
     to life,  
 He possibly might have contrived to attain  
 Not eminence only, but worth. So, again,  
 Had he been of his own house the first-born,  
     each gift  
 Of a mind many-gifted had gone to uplift

A great name by a name's greatest uses.

But there

He stood isolated, opposed, as it were,  
To life's great realities; part of no plan,  
And if ever a nobler and happier man  
He might hope to become, that alone could be  
when

With all that is real in life and in men  
What was real in him should have been recon-  
ciled;

When each influence now from experience  
exiled

Should have seized on his being combined with  
his nature,

And form'd, as by fusion, a new human crea-  
ture:

As when those airy elements viewless to sight  
(The amalgam of which, if our science be right,  
The germ of this populous planet doth fold)

Unite in the glass of the chemist, behold!  
Where a void seem'd before, there a substance  
appears,

From the fusion of forces whence issued the  
spheres!

VII.

But the permanent cause why his life fail'd and  
miss'd

The full value of life was,—where man should  
resist

The world, which man's genius is call'd to com-  
mand,

He gave way, less from lack of the power to  
withstand,

Than from lack of the resolute will to retain  
 Those strongholds of life which the world  
 strives to gain.

Let this character go in the old-fashion'd way,  
 With the moral thereof tightly tacked to it.

Say—

“Let any man once show the world that he  
 feels

Afraid of its bark, and 'twill fly at his heels:  
 Let him fearlessly face it, 'twill leave him  
 alone:

But 'twill fawn at his feet if he flings it a bone.”

#### VIII.

The moon of September, now half at the full,  
 Was unfolding from darkness and dreamland  
 the lull

Of the quiet blue air, where the many-faced  
 hills

Watch'd, well-pleased, their fair slaves, the  
 light, foam-footed rills.

Dance and sing down the steep marble stairs of  
 their courts,

And gracefully fashion a thousand sweet sports.

Lord Alfred (by this on his journeying far)

Was pensively puffing his Lopez cigar

And brokenly humming an old opera strain,

And thinking, perchance, of those castles in  
 Spain

Which that long rocky barrier hid from his  
 sight;

When suddenly, out of the neighboring night,  
 A horseman emerged from a fold of the hill,

And so startled his steed that was winding at  
will  
Up the thin dizzy strip of a pathway which led  
O'er the mountain—the reins on its neck, and  
its head  
Hanging lazily forward—that, but for a hand  
Light and ready, yet firm, in familiar com-  
mand,  
Both rider and horse might have been in a trice  
Hurl'd horribly over the grim precipice.

## IX.

As soon as the moment's alarm had subsided,  
And the oath with which nothing can find  
unprovided  
A thoroughbred Englishman, safely exploded,  
Lord Alfred unbent (as Apollo his bow did  
Now and then) his erectness; and looking,  
not ruder  
Than such inroad would warrant, survey'd the  
intruder,  
Whose arrival so nearly cut short in his glory  
My hero, and finished abruptly this story.

## X.

The stranger, a man of his own age or less,  
Well mounted, and simple though rich in his  
dress,  
Wore his beard and mustache in the fashion of  
France.  
His face, which was pale, gather'd force from  
the glance  
Of a pair of dark, vivid, and eloquent eyes.  
With a gest of apology, touch'd with surprise,

He lifted his hat, bow'd, and courteously made  
 Some excuse in such well-cadenced French as  
     betray'd  
 At the first word he spoke, the Parisian.

## XI.

I swear I have wander'd about in the world  
     everywhere;  
 From many strange mouths have heard many  
     strange tongues;  
 Strain'd with many strange idioms my lips and  
     my lungs;  
 Walk'd in many a far land, regretting my own;  
 In many a language groaned many a groan;  
 And have often had reason to curse those wild  
     fellows  
 Who built the high house at which Heaven  
     turn'd jealous.  
 Making human audacity stumble and stammer  
 When seized by the throat in the hard gripe of  
     Grammar.  
 But the language of languages dearest to me  
 Is that in which once *O ma toute cherie*,  
 When, together, we bent o'er your nosegay for  
     hours,  
 You explain'd what was silently said by the  
     flowers,  
 And, selecting the sweetest of all, sent a flame  
 Through my heart, as, in laughing, you mur-  
     mur'd *Je t'aime*.

## XII.

The Italians have voices like peacocks; the  
     Spanish



Smell, I fancy, of garlic; the Swedish and  
 Danish  
 Have something too Runic, too rough and un-  
 shod, in  
 Their accents for mouths not descended from  
 Odin;  
 German gives me a cold in the head, sets me  
 wheezing  
 And coughing; and Russian is nothing but  
 sneezing;  
 But, by Belus and Babel! I never have heard,  
 And I never shall hear (I well know it) one  
 word,  
 Of that delicate idiom of Paris without  
 Feeling morally sure, beyond question or doubt  
 By the wild way in which my heart inwardly  
 flutter'd  
 That my heart's native tongue to my heart  
 had been utter'd.  
 And whene'er I hear French spoken as I  
 approve  
 I feel myself quietly falling in love.

## XIII.

Lord Alfred, on hearing the stranger, appeased  
 By a something, an accent, a cadence, which  
 pleased  
 His ear with that pledge of good breeding  
 which tells  
 At once of the world in whose fellowship dwells  
 The speaker that owns it, was glad to remark  
 In the horseman a man one might meet after  
 dark  
 Without fear.

And thus, not disagreeably impress'd,  
As it seem'd, with each other, the two men  
    abreast  
Rode on slowly a moment.

## XIV.

STRANGER.

I see, Sir, you are  
A smoker. Allow me!

ALFRED.

Pray take a cigar.

STRANGER.

Many thanks! . . . Such cigars are a luxury here.  
Do you go to Serchon?

ALFRED.

Yes; and you?

STRANGER.

Yes. I fear,  
Since our road is the same, that our journey  
    must be  
Somewhat closer than is our acquaintance.  
You see  
How narrow the path is. I'm tempted to ask  
Your permission to finish (no difficult task!)  
The cigar you have given me (really a prize!)  
In your company.

ALFRED.

Charm'd, Sir, to find your road lies  
In the way of my own inclinations! Indeed  
The dream of your nation I find in this weed.

In the distant Savannahs a talisman grows  
That makes all men brothers that use it . . .  
    who knows?

That blaze which erewhile from the *Boulevard*  
    outbroke,  
It has ended where wisdom begins, Sir,—in  
    smoke.

Messieurs Lozez (whatever your publicists  
    write)

Have done more in their way human kind to  
    unite,

Perchance, than ten Prudhons.

STRANGER.

Yes. Ah, what a scene!

ALFRED.

Humph! Nature is here too pretentious. Her  
    mien

Is too haughty. One likes to be coax'd, not  
    compell'd,

To the notice such beauty resents if withheld,  
She seems to be saying too plainly, "Admire  
    me!"

And I answer, "Yes, madam, I do: but you  
    tire me."

STRANGER.

That sunset, just now though . .

ALFRED.

A very old trick!

One would think that the sun by this time  
    must be sick

Of blushing at what, by this time, he must  
 know  
 Too well to be shocked by—this world.

STRANGER.

Ah, 'tis so  
 With us all. 'Tis the sinner that best knew  
 the world  
 At Twenty, whose lip is, at sixty, most curl'd  
 With disdain of its follies. You stay at Ser-  
 chon?

ALFRED.

A day or two only.

STRANGER.

The season is done.

ALFRED.

Already!

STRANGER.

'Twas shorter this year than the last.  
 Folly soon wears her shoes out. She dances  
 so fast,  
 We are all of us tired.

ALFRED.

You know the place well.

STRANGER.

I have been there two seasons.

ALFRED.

Pray who is the Belle  
 Of the Baths at this moment?

STRANGER.

The same who has been  
The belle of all places in which she is seen;  
The belle of all Paris last winter; last spring  
The belle of all Baden.

ALFRED.

An uncommon thing!

STRANGER.

Sir, an uncommon beauty! . . . I rather should  
say,  
An uncommon character. Truly, each day  
One meets women whose beauty is equal to  
hers,  
But none with the charm of Lucile de Nevers.

ALFRED.

Madame de Nevers!

STRANGER.

Do you know her?

ALFRED.

I know.

Or, rather, I knew her—a long time ago.  
I almost forget. . .

STRANGER.

What a wit! what a grace  
In her language! her movements! what play  
in her face!  
And yet what a sadness she seems to conceal!

ALFRED.

You speak like a lover.

STRANGER.

I speak as I feel,  
 But not like a lover. What interests me so  
 In Lucile, at the same time forbids me, I  
 know,  
 To give to that interest, whate'er the sensa-  
 tion,  
 The name we men give to an hour's admiration  
 A night's passing passion, an actress's eyes,  
 A dancing girl's ankles, a fine lady's sighs.

ALFRED.

Yes, I quite comprehend. But this sadness—  
 this shade  
 Which you speak of? . . . it almost would make  
 me afraid  
 Your gay countrymen, Sir, less adroit must  
 have grown,  
 Since when, as a stripling, at Paris, I own  
 I found in them terrible rivals,—if yet  
 They have all lack'd the skill to console this  
 regret  
 (If regret be the word I should use), or fulfill  
 This desire (if desire be the word), which  
 seems still  
 To endure unappeased. For I take it for  
 granted,  
 From all that you say, that the will was not  
 wanted.

## XV.

The stranger replied, not without irritation,  
 "I have heard that an Englishman—one of  
 your nation  
 I presume—and if so, I must beg you, indeed,  
 To excuse the contempt which I . . ."

ALFRED.

Pray, Sir, proceed  
 With your tale. My compatriot, what was his  
 crime?

STRANGER.

Oh, nothing! His folly was not so sublime  
 As to merit that term. If I blamed him just  
 now,  
 It was not for the sin, but the silliness.

ALFRED.

How?

STRANGER.

I own I hate Botany. Still, . . . I admit,  
 Although I myself have no passion for it,  
 And do not understand, yet I cannot despise  
 The cold man of science, who walks with his  
 eyes  
 All alert through a garden of flowers, and  
 strips  
 The lilies' gold tongues, and the roses' red  
 lips,  
 With a ruthless dissection; since he, I suppose,  
 Has some purpose beyond the mere mischief  
 he does.

But the stupid and mischievous boy, that up-  
 roots  
 The exotics, and tramples the tender young  
 shoots,  
 For a boy's brutal pastime, and only because  
 He knows no distinction 'twixt heartsease and  
 haws,—  
 One would wish, for the sake of each nursling  
 so nipp'd,  
 To catch the young rascal and have him well  
 whipp'd!

ALFRED.

Some compatriot of mine, do I then under-  
 stand,  
 With a cold Northern heart, and a rude Eng-  
 lish hand,  
 Has injured your Rosebud of France?

STRANGER.

Sir, I know

But little, or nothing. Yet some faces show  
 The last act of a tragedy in their regard:  
 Though the first scenes be wanting, it yet is  
 not hard  
 To divine, more or less, what the plot may have  
 been,  
 And what sort of actors have pass'd o'er the  
 scene.  
 And whenever I gaze on the face of Lucile,  
 With its pensive and passionless languor, I  
 feel  
 That some feeling hath burnt there . . . burnt  
 out, and burnt up



Health and hope. So you feel when you gaze  
 down the cup  
 Of extinguished volcanoes; you judge of the  
 fire  
 Once there, by the ravage you see;—the de-  
 sire,  
 By the apathy left in its wake, and that sense  
 Of a moral, immovable, mute impotence.

ALFRED.

Humph! . . . I see you have finished, at last,  
 your cigar;  
 Can I offer another?

STRANGER.

No, thank you. We are  
 Not two miles from Serchon.

ALFRED.

You know the road well?

STRANGER.

I have often been over it.

XVI.

Here a pause fell  
 On their converse. Still musingly on, side by  
 side,  
 In the moonlight, the two men continued to  
 ride  
 Down the dim mountain pathway. But each  
 for the rest  
 Of their journey, although they still rode on  
 abreast,

Continued to follow in silence the train  
Of the different feelings that haunted his brain ;  
And each, as though roused from a deep rever-  
ery,  
Almost shouted, descending the mountain, to  
see  
Burst at once on the moonlight the silvery  
Baths,  
The long lime-tree alley, the dark gleaming  
paths,  
With the lamps twinkling through them—the  
quaint wooden roofs—  
The little white houses.  
The clatter of hoofs,  
And the music of wandering bands, up the  
walls  
Of the steep hanging hill, at remote intervals  
Reached them, cross'd by the sound of the  
clacking of whips,  
And here and there, faintly, through serpen-  
tine slips  
Of verdant rose-gardens deep-sheltered with  
screens  
Of airy acacias and dark evergreens,  
They could mark the white dresses and catch  
the light songs  
Of the lovely Parisians that wander'd in  
throng,  
Led by Laughter and Love through the old  
eventide  
Down the dream-haunted valley, or up the hill-  
side.

## XVII.

At length, at the door of the inn l'Herisson  
 (Pray go there, if ever you go to Serchon!),  
 The two horsemen, well pleased to have reach'd  
 it, alighted

And exchanged their last greetings.

The Frenchman invited  
 Lord Alfred to dinner. Lord Alfred declined.  
 He had letters to write, and felt tired. So he  
 dined

In his own rooms that night.

With an unquiet eye  
 He watched his companion depart; nor knew  
 why,

Beyond all accountable reason or measure,  
 He felt in his breast such a sovran displeasure.

"The fellow's good-looking," he murmur'd at  
 last,

"And yet not a coxcomb." Some ghost of the  
 past

Vex'd him still.

"If he love her," he thought, "let him win  
 her."

Then he turn'd to the future—and order'd his  
 dinner.

## XVIII.

O hour of all hours, the most bless'd upon  
 earth,

Blessed hour of our dinners!

The land of his birth;  
 The face of his first love; the bills that he  
 owes;

The twaddle of friends and the venom of foes;

The sermon he heard when to church he last  
 went;  
 The money he borrow'd, the money he spent;—  
 All of these things a man, I believe, may for-  
 get,  
 And not be the worse for forgetting; but yet  
 Never, never, oh, never! earth's luckiest sin-  
 ner  
 Hath unpunish'd forgotten the hour of his din-  
 ner!  
 Indigestion, that conscience of every bad stom-  
 ach,  
 Shall relentlessly gnaw and pursue him with  
 some ache  
 Or some pain; and trouble, remorseless, his  
 best ease,  
 As the Furies once troubled the sleep of  
 Orestes.

## XIX.

✕ We may live without poetry, music and art;  
 We may live without conscience, and live with-  
 out heart;  
 We may live without friends; we may live  
 without books;  
 But civilized man cannot live without cooks.  
 He may live without books,—what is knowl-  
 edge but grieving?  
 He may live without hope,—what is hope but  
 deceiving?  
 He may live without love,—what is passion but  
 pining?  
 But where is the man that can live without  
 dining?

## XX.

Lord Alfred found, waiting his coming, a note  
From Lucile.

“Your last letter has reach’d me,” she  
wrote.

“This evening, alas! I must go to the ball,  
And shall not be at home till too late for your  
call;

But to-morrow, at any rate, *sans faute*, at One  
You will find me at home, and will find me  
alone.

Meanwhile, let me thank you sincerely, milord,  
For the honor with which you adhere to your  
word.

Yes, I thank you, Lord Alfred! To-morrow  
then.

“L.”

## XXI.

I find myself terribly puzzled to tell  
The feelings with which Alfred Vargrave flung  
down

This note, as he pour’d out his wine. I must  
own

That I think he, himself, could have hardly  
explain’d

Those feelings exactly,

“Yes, yes,” as he drain’d  
The glass down, he mutter’d, “Jack’s right,  
after all.

The coquette!”

“Does milord mean to go to the ball?”  
Ask’d the waiter, who linger’d.

“Perhaps.—I don’t know.

You may keep me a ticket, in case I should  
go.'

## XXII.

Oh, better, no doubt, is a dinner of herbs,  
When season'd by love, which no rancor dis-  
turbs,  
And sweeten'd by all that's sweetest in life,  
Than turbot, bisque, ortolans, eaten in strife!  
But if, out of humor, and hungry, alone,  
A man should sit down to a dinner, each one  
Of the dishes of which the cook chooses to spoil  
With a horrible mixture of garlic and oil,  
The chances are ten against one, I must own,  
He gets up as ill-temper'd as when he sat down.  
And if any reader this fact to dispute is  
Disposed, I say . . . "*Allium edat cicutis  
Nocentius!*"

Over the fruit and the wine  
Undisturb'd the wasp settled. The evening  
was fine.  
Lord Alfred his chair by the window had set,  
And languidly lighted his small cigarette.  
The window was open. The warm air without  
Waved the flame of the candles. The moths  
were about.  
In the gloom he sat gloomy.

## XXIII.

Gay sounds from below  
Floated up like faint echoes of joys long ago,  
And night deepen'd apace; through the dark  
avenues

The lamps twinkled bright; and by threes and  
by twos,  
The idlers of Serchon were strolling at will,  
As Lord Alfred could see from the cool win-  
dow-sill,  
Where his gaze, as he languidly turn'd it, fell  
o'er  
His late traveling companion, now passing be-  
fore  
The inn, at the window of which he still sat,  
In full toilet,—boots varnish'd, and snowy cra-  
vat,  
Gayly smoothing and buttoning a yellow kid  
glove,  
As he turned down the avenue.

Watching above,

From his window, the stranger, who stopp'd as  
he walk'd  
To mix with those groups and now nodded,  
now talk'd,  
To the young Paris dandies, Lord Alfred dis-  
cern'd  
By the way hats were lifted, and glances were  
turn'd,  
That this unknown acquaintance, now bound  
for the ball,  
Was a person of rank or of fashion; for all  
Whom he bow'd to in passing, or stopped with  
and chatter'd,  
Walk'd on with a look which implied . . . “I  
feel flatter'd!”

## XXIV.

His form was soon lost in the distance and gloom.

## XXV.

Lord Alfred still sat by himself in his room.  
He had finish'd, one after the other, a dozen  
Or more cigarettes. He had thought of his  
cousin:  
He had thought of Matilda, and thought of  
Lucile:  
He had thought about many things; thought a  
great deal  
Of himself, of his past life, his future, his  
present:  
He had thought of the moon, neither full moon  
nor crescent;  
Of the gay world, so sad! life, so sweet and so  
sour!  
He had thought, too, of glory, and fortune,  
and power;  
Thought of love, and the country, and sym-  
pathy, and  
A poet's asylum in some distant land:  
Thought of man in the abstract, and woman,  
no doubt,  
In particular; also he had thought much about  
His digestion, his debts, and his dinner: and  
last  
He thought that the night would be stupidly  
pass'd  
If he thought any more of such matters at all;  
So he rose and resolved to set out for the ball.



## XXVI.

I believe, ere he finish'd his tardy toilet,  
That Lord Alfred had spoil'd, and flung by in  
a pet,  
Half a dozen white neckcloths, and looked for  
the nonce  
Twenty times in the glass, if he look'd in it  
once.  
I believe that he split up, in drawing them on,  
Three pair of pale lavender gloves, one by one.  
And this is the reason, no doubt, that at last,  
When he reached the Casino, although he  
walk'd fast,  
He heard, as he hurriedly entered the door,  
The church clock struck Twelve.

## XXVII.

The last waltz was just o'er.  
The chaperons and dancers were all in a flutter.  
A crowd blocked the door; and a buzz and a  
mutter  
Went about in the room as a young man,  
whose face  
Lord Alfred had seen ere he enter'd that place,  
But a few hours ago, through the perfumed  
and warm  
Flowery porch, with a lady that lean'd on his  
arm  
Like a queen in a fable of old fairy days,  
Left the ballroom.

## XXVIII.

The hubbub of comment and praise  
 Reach'd Lord Alfred as just then he enter'd.  
“*Ma foi!*”

Said a Frenchman beside him, . . . “That  
 lucky Luvois  
 Has obtained all the gifts of the gods . . . rank  
 and wealth,  
 And good looks, and then such inexhaustible  
 health!

He that hath shall have more; and this truth,  
 I surmise,  
 Is the cause why, to-night, by the beautiful  
 eyes

Of *la charmante Lucile* more distinguish'd than  
 all,

He so gayly goes off with the belle of the  
 ball.”

“Is it true,” asked a lady aggressively fat,  
 Who, fierce as a female Leviathan, sat  
 By another that look'd like a needle, all steel  
 And tenuity—“Luvois will marry Lucile?”  
 The needle seem'd jerk'd by a virulent twitch,  
 As though it were bent upon driving a stitch  
 Through somebody's character.

“Madam,” replied,  
 Interposing, a young man who sat by their  
 side,  
 And was languidly fanning his face with his  
 hat,

“I am ready to bet my new Tilbury that,  
 If Luvois has proposed, the Comtesse has  
 refused.”

The fat and thin ladies were highly amused.  
 "Refused! . . . what! a young Duke, not  
 thirty, my dear,  
 With at least half a million (what is it?) a  
 year!"

"That may be," said the third; "yet I know  
 some time since  
 Castelmar was refused, though as rich, and a  
 Prince.

But Luvois, who was never before in his life  
 In love with a woman who was not a wife,  
 Is now certainly serious."

## XXIX.

The music once more  
 Recommenced.

## XXX.

Said Lord Alfred, "This ball is a bore!  
 And return'd to the inn, somewhat worse than  
 before.

## XXXI.

There, whilst musing, he lean'd the dark  
 valley above,  
 Through the warm land were wand'ring the  
 spirits of love,  
 A soft breeze in the white window drapery  
 stirr'd;  
 In the blossom'd acacia the lone cricket chirr'd;  
 The scent of the roses fell faint o'er the night,  
 And the moon on the mountain was dreaming  
 in light.  
 Repose, and yet rapture! that pensive wild  
 nature

Impregnate with passion in each breathing  
feature!

A stone's throw from thence, through the large  
lime trees peep'd

In a garden of roses, a white chalet, steep'd  
In the moonbeams. The windows oped down  
to the lawn;

The casements were open; the curtains were  
drawn;

Lights stream'd from the inside; and with  
them the sound

Of music and song. In the garden, around  
A table with fruits, wine, tea, ices, there set,  
Half a dozen young men and young women  
were met.

Light, laughter, and voices, and music all  
stream'd

Through the quiet-leaved limes. At the win-  
dow there seem'd

For one moment the outline, familiar and fair,  
Of a white dress, white neck, and soft dusky  
hair

Which Lord Alfred remember'd . . . a moment  
or so

It hover'd, then pass'd into shadow; and slow  
The soft notes, from a tender piano upflung,  
Floated forth, and a voice unforgotten thus  
sung:—

“Hear a song that was born in the land of my  
birth!

The anchors are lifted the fair ship is free,  
And the shouts of the mariners float in its  
mirth

'Twixt the light in the sky and the light on  
the sea.

“And this ship is a world. She is freighted  
with souls,  
She is freighted with merchandise: proudly  
she sails  
With the Labor that stores, and the Will that  
controls  
The gold in the ingots, the silk in the bales.

“From the gardens of Pleasure, where reddens  
the rose,  
And the scent of the cedar is faint on the  
air,  
Past the harbors of Traffic, sublimely she goes,  
Man's hopes o'er the world of the waters to  
bear!

“Where the cheer from the harbors of Traffic  
is heard,  
Where the gardens of Pleasure fade fast on  
the sight,  
O'er the rose, o'er the cedar, there passes a  
bird,  
'Tis the Paradise Bird, never known to alight.

“And that bird, bright and bold as a Poet's  
desire,  
Roams her own native heavens, the realms  
of her birth.  
There she soars like a seraph, she shines like a  
fire,

And her plumage hath never been sullied by  
earth,

“And the mariners greet her; there’s song on  
each lip,  
For that bird of good omen, and joy in each  
eye.

And the ship and the bird, and the bird and  
the ship,  
Together go forth over ocean and sky.

“Fast, fast fades the land! far the rose-gar-  
dens flee,  
And far fleet the harbors. In regions  
unknown

The ship is alone on a desert of sea,  
And the bird in a desert of sky is alone.

“In those regions unknown, o’er that desert of  
air,  
Down that desert of waters—tremendous in  
wrath—

The storm-wind Euroclydon leaps from his lair,  
And cleaves, through the waves of the ocean,  
his path.

“And the bird in the cloud, and the ship on  
the wave,  
Overtaken, are beaten about by wild gales;  
And the mariners all rush their cargo to save,  
Of the gold in the ingots, the silk in the  
bales.

“Lo! a wonder, which never before hath been  
heard,  
For it never before hath been given to sight,  
On the ship hath descended the Paradise  
Bird,  
The Paradise Bird, never known to alight!

“The bird which the mariners bless'd, when  
each lip  
Had a song from the omen that gladden'd  
each eye;  
The bright bird for shelter hath flown to the  
ship  
From the wrath on the sea and the wrath in  
the sky.

“But the mariners heed not the bird any more.  
They are felling the masts—they are cutting  
the sails;  
Some are working, some weeping, and some  
wrangling o'er  
Their gold in the ingots, their silk in the  
bales.

“Soul of men are on board; wealth of man in  
the hold;  
And the storm-wind Euroclydon sweeps to  
his prey;  
And who heeds the bird? ‘Save the silk and  
the gold!’  
And the bird from her shelter the gust  
sweeps away!

“Poor Paradise Bird! on her lone flight once  
 more  
 Back again in the wake of the wind she is  
 driven—  
 To be ’whelmed in the storm, or above it to  
 soar,  
 And, if rescued from ocean, to vanish in  
 heaven!

“And the ship rides the waters, and weathers  
 the gales:  
 From the haven she nears the rejoicing is  
 heard,  
 All hands are at work on the ingots, the bales,  
 Save a child, sitting lonely, who misses—the  
 Bird.”

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### CANTO III.

#### I.

With stout iron shoes be my Pegasus shod!  
 For my road is a rough one: flint, stubble, and  
 clod,  
 Blue clay, and black quagmire, brambles no  
 few,  
 And I gallop up-hill, now.  
 There’s terror that’s true  
 In that tale of a youth who, one night at a  
 revel,  
 Amidst music and mirth lured and wiled by  
 some devil,



Follow'd ever one mask through the mad mas-  
 querade,  
 Till, pursued to some chamber deserted ('tis  
 said),  
 He unmask'd, with a kiss, the strange lady,  
 and stood  
 Face to face with a thing not of flesh nor of  
 blood.  
 In this Mask of the Passions, call'd Life, there's  
 no human  
 Emotion, though mask'd, or in man or in  
 woman,  
 But, when faced and unmask'd, it will leave  
 us at last  
 Struck by some supernatural aspect aghast.  
 For truth is appalling and eldritch, as seen  
 By this world's artificial lamplights, and we  
 screen  
 From our sight the strange vision that troubles  
 our life.  
 Alas! why is Genius forever at strife  
 With the world, which, despite the world's  
 self, it ennobles?  
 Why is it that Genius perplexes and troubles  
 And offends the effete life it comes to renew?  
 'Tis the terror of truth! 'tis that Genius is true.

## II.

Lucile de Nevers (if her riddle I read)  
 Was a woman of genius: whose genius, indeed,  
 With her life was at war. Once, but once, in  
 that life  
 The chance had been hers to escape from this  
 strife

In herself; finding peace in the life of another  
 From the passionate wants she, in hers, failed  
 to smother.

But the chance fell too soon, when the crude  
 restless power

Which had been to her nature so fatal a dower,  
 Only wearied the man it yet haunted and  
 thrall'd;

And that moment, once lost, had been never  
 recall'd.

Yet it left her heart sore: and to shelter her  
 heart

From approach she then sought, in that deli-  
 cate art

Of concealment, those thousand adroit strat-  
 egies

Of feminine wit, which repel while they please,  
 A weapon, at once, and a shield to conceal

And defend all that women can earnestly feel.

Thus, striving her instincts to hide and  
 repress,

She felt frighten'd at times by her very suc-  
 cess:

She pined for the hill-tops, the clouds, and the  
 stars:

Golden wires may annoy us as much as steel  
 bars

If they keep us behind prison-windows: impas-  
 sion'd

Her heart rose and burst the light cage she  
 had fashion'd

Out of glittering trifles around it.

## Unknown

To herself, all her instincts, without hesitation,

Embraced the idea of self-immolation.

The strong spirit in her, had her life but been blended

With some man's whose heart had her own comprehended,

All its wealth at his feet would have lavishly thrown.

For him she had struggled and striven alone;

For him had aspired; in him had transfused

All the gladness and grace of her nature; and used

For him only the spells of its delicate power:

Like the ministering fairy that brings from her bower

To some maze all the treasures, whose use the fond elf,

More enrich'd by her love, disregards for herself.

But standing apart, as she ever had done,

And her genius, which needed a vent, finding none

In the broad fields of action thrown wide to man's power,

She unconsciously made it her bulwark and tower,

And built in it her refuge, whence lightly she hurl'd

Her contempt at the fashions and forms of the world.

And the permanent cause why she now miss'd  
 and fail'd  
 That firm hold upon life she so keenly assail'd,  
 Was, in all those diurnal occasions that place  
 Say—the world and the woman opposed face  
 to face,  
 Where the woman must yield, she, refusing to  
 stir,

Offended the world, which in turn wounded  
 her.

As before, in the old-fashion'd manner, I fit  
 To this character, also, its moral; to wit,  
 Say—the world is a nettle; disturb it, it stings:  
 Grasp it firmly, it stings not. On one of two  
 things,

If you would not be stung, it behooves you to  
 settle:

Avoid it, or crush it. She crush'd not the nettle;  
 For she could not; nor would she avoid it; she  
 tried

With the weak hand of woman to thrust it  
 aside,

And it stung her. A woman is too slight a  
 thing

To trample the world without feeling its sting.

### III.

One lodges but simply at Serchon; yet, thanks  
 To the season that changes forever the banks  
 Of the blossoming mountains, and shifts the  
 light cloud

O'er the valley, and hushes or rouses the loud

Wind that wails in the pines, or creeps mur-  
muring down  
The dark evergreen slopes to the slumbering  
town,  
And the torrent that falls, faintly heard from  
afar,  
And the blue-bells that purple the dapple-gray  
scaur,  
One sees with each month of the many-faced  
year  
A thousand sweet changes of beauty appear.  
The chalet where dwelt the Comtesse de  
Nevers  
Rested half up the base of a mountain of firs,  
In a garden of roses, reveal'd to the road,  
Yet withdrawn from its noise: 'twas a peace-  
ful abode.  
And the walls, and the roofs, with their gables  
like hoods,  
Which the monks wear, were built of sweet  
resinous woods.  
The sunlight of noon, as Lord Alfred ascended  
The steep garden paths, every odor had  
blended  
Of the ardent carnations, and faint heliotropes,  
With the balms floated down from the dark  
wooded slopes:  
A light breeze at the windows was playing  
about,  
And the white curtains floated, now in, and  
now out.  
The house was all hush'd when he rang at the  
door,

Which was open'd to him in a moment, or  
more,  
By an old nodding negress, whose sable head  
shined  
In the sun like a cocoa-nut polish'd in Ind,  
'Neath the snowy *foulard* which about it was  
wound,  
Lord Alfred sprang forward at once, with a  
bound,  
He remember'd the nurse of Lucile. The old  
dame,  
Whose teeth and whose eyes used to beam  
when he came,  
With a boy's eager step, in the blithe days of  
yore,  
To pass, unannounced, her young mistress's  
door.  
The old woman had fondled Lucile on her  
knee  
When she left, as an infant, far over the sea,  
In India the tomb of a mother, unknown,  
To pine, a pale flow'ret, in great Paris town.  
She had sooth'd the child's sobs on her breast,  
when she read  
The letter that told her her father was dead.  
An astute, shrewd adventurer, who, like  
Ulysses,  
Had studied men, cities, laws, wars, the abysses  
Of statecraft, with varying fortunes, was he.  
He had wander'd the world through, by land  
and by sea,  
And knew it in most of its phases. Strong  
will,

Subtle tact, and soft manners, had given him  
skill  
To conciliate Fortune, and courage to brave  
Her displeasure. Thrice shipwreck'd, and cast  
by the wave  
On his own quick resources, they rarely had  
fail'd  
His command: often baffled, he ever prevail'd,  
In his combat with fate: to-day flatter'd and  
fed  
By monarchs, to-morrow in search of mere  
bread.  
The offspring of times trouble-haunted he came  
Of a family ruin'd, yet noble in name.  
He lost sight of his fortune, at twenty, in  
France;  
And, half statesman, half soldier, and wholly  
Freelance,  
Had wander'd in search of it, over the world,  
Into India.

But scarce had the nomad unfurl'd  
His wandering tent at Mysore, in the smile  
Of a Rajah (whose court he controll'd for a  
while,  
And whose council he prompted and govern'd  
by stealth);  
Scarce, indeed, had he wedded an Indian of  
wealth,  
Who died giving birth to this daughter, be-  
fore  
He was borne to the tomb of his wife at  
Mysore.  
His fortune, which fell to his orphan, per-  
chance

Had secured her a home with his sister in  
 France,  
 A lone woman, the last of the race left. Lucile  
 Neither felt, nor affected, the wish to conceal  
 The half-Eastern blood, which appear'd to  
 bequeath  
 (Reveal'd now and then, though but rarely,  
 beneath  
 That outward repose that conceal'd it in her)  
 A something half wild to her strange character.  
 The nurse with the orphan, awhile broken-  
 hearted,  
 At the door of a convent in Paris had parted.  
 But later, once more, with her mistress she  
 tarried,  
 When the girl, by that grim maiden aunt, had  
 been married  
 To a dreary old Count, who had sullenly died,  
 With no claim on her tears—she had wept as  
 a bride.  
 Said Lord Alfred, "Your mistress expects me."  
 The crone  
 Opened the drawing-room door, and there left  
 him alone.

## v.

O'er the soft atmosphere of this temple of  
 grace  
 Rested silence and perfume. No sound reach'd  
 the place.  
 In the white curtains waver'd the delicate shade  
 Of the heaving acacias, through which the  
 breeze play'd.



O'er the smooth wooden floor, polished dark  
as a glass,

Fragrant white Indian matting allowed you to  
pass.

In light olive baskets, by window and door,  
Some hung from the ceiling, some crowding  
the floor,

Rich wild flowers pluck'd by Lucile from the  
hill,

Seem'd the room with their passionate pres-  
ence to fill:

Blue aconite, hid in white roses, reposed;

The deep belladonna its vermeil disclosed;

And the frail saponaire, and tender blue-bell,

And the purple valerian,—each child of the fell

And the solitude flourish'd, fed fair from the  
source

Of waters the huntsman scarce heeds in his  
course;

Where the chamois and izard, with delicate  
hoof,

Pause or flit through the pinnacled silence  
aloof.

## VI.

Here you felt, by the sense of its beauty  
reposed,

That you stood in a shrine of sweet thoughts.

Half enclosed

In the light slept the flowers; all was pure and  
at rest;

All peaceful; all modest; all seem'd self-pos-  
sess'd,

And aware of the silence. No vestige nor  
trace

Of a young woman's coquetry troubled the  
place.

He stood by the window. A cloud pass'd the  
sun.

A light breeze uplifted the leaves, one by one.  
Just then Lucile enter'd the room, undiscern'd  
By Lord Alfred, whose face to the window was  
turn'd,

In a strange revery.

The time was, when Lucile,  
In beholding that man, could not help but  
reveal

The rapture, the fear, which wrench'd out  
every nerve

In the heart of the girl from the woman's  
reserve.

And now—she gazed at him, calm, smiling,—  
perchance

Indifferent.

#### VII.

Indifferently turning his glance,  
Alfred Vargrave encounter'd that gaze un-  
aware.

O'er a bodice snow-white stream'd her soft  
dusky hair;

A rose-bud half blown in her hand; in her  
eyes

A half-pensive smile.

A sharp cry of surprise  
Escaped from his lips: some unknown agita-  
tion,

An invincible, a strange palpitation,  
 Confused his ingenious and frivolous wit;  
 Overtook, and entangled, and paralyzed it.  
 That wit so complacent and docile, that ever  
 Lightly came at the call of the lightest en-  
 deavor,  
 Ready coin'd, and availably current as gold,  
 Which, secure of its value, so fluently roll'd  
 In free circulation from hand on to hand  
 For the usage of all, at a moment's command;  
 For once it rebell'd, it was mute and unstirr'd,  
 And he look'd at Lucile without speaking a  
 word.

## VIII.

Perhaps what so troubled him was, that the  
 face  
 On whose features he gazed had no more than  
 a trace  
 Of the face his remembrance had imaged for  
 years.  
 Yes! the face he remember'd was faded with  
 tears:  
 Grief had famish'd the figure, and dimm'd the  
 dark eyes,  
 And starved the pale lips, too acquainted with  
 sighs  
 And that tender, and gracious, and fond *coquet-*  
*terie*  
 Of a woman who knows her least ribbon to be  
 Something dear to the lips that so warmly  
 caress  
 Every sacred detail of her exquisite dress,  
 In the careless toilet of Lucile,—then too sad

To care aught to her changeable beauty to  
add—

Lord Alfred had never admired before!

Alas! poor Lucile, in those weak days of yore,  
Had neglected herself, never heeding, or  
thinking

(While the blossom and bloom of her beauty  
were shrinking)

That sorrow can beautify only the heart—

Not the face—of a woman; and can but impart  
Its endearment to one that has suffer'd. In  
truth

Grief hath beauty for grief; but gay youth  
loves gay youth.

## IX.

The woman that now met, unshrinking, his  
gaze,

Seem'd to bask in the silent but sumptuous haze  
Of that soft second summer, more ripe than  
the first.

Which returns when the bud to the blossom  
hath burst,

In despite of the stormiest April. Lucile  
Had acquired that matchless unconscious  
appeal

To the homage which none but a churl would  
withhold—

That caressing and exquisite grace—never  
bold,

Ever present—which just a few women possess.  
From a healthful repose, undisturb'd by the  
stress

Of unquiet emotions, her soft cheek had drawn

A freshness as pure as the twilight of dawn.  
 Her figure, though slight, had revived every-  
     where  
 The luxurious proportions of youth; and her  
     hair—  
 Once shorn as an offering to passionate love—  
 Now floated or rested redundant above  
 Her airy pure forehead and throat; gather'd  
     loose  
 Under which, by one violet knot, the profuse  
 Milk-white folds of a cool modest garment  
     reposed.  
 Rippled faint by the breast they half hid, half  
     disclosed,  
 And her simple attire thus in all things reveal'd  
 The fine art which so artfully all things con-  
     ceal'd.

## x.

Lord Alfred, who never conceived that Lucile  
 Could have look'd so enchanting, felt tempted  
     to kneel  
 At her feet, and her pardon with passion im-  
     plore;  
 But the calm smile that met him sufficed to  
     restore  
 The pride and the bitterness needed to meet  
 The occasion with dignity due and discreet.

## xi.

"Madam,"—thus he began with a voice  
     reassured,—  
 "You see that your latest command has secured  
 My immediate obedience—presuming I may

Consider my freedom restored from this day."—  
 "I had thought," said Lucile, with a smile gay  
 yet sad,

"That your freedom from me not a fetter has  
 had.

Indeed! . . . in my chains have you rested till  
 now?

I had not so flattered myself, I avow!"

"For Heaven's sake, Madam," Lord Alfred  
 replied,

"Do not jest! has the moment no sadness?"  
 he sigh'd.

" 'Tis an ancient tradition," she answer'd, "a  
 tale

Often told—a position too sure to prevail  
 In the end of all legends of love. If we wrote,  
 When we first love, foreseeing that hour yet  
 remote,

Wherein of necessity each would recall  
 From the other the poor foolish records of all  
 Those emotions, whose pain, when recorded,  
 seem'd bliss,

Should we write as we wrote? But one thinks  
 not of this!

At Twenty (who does not at Twenty?) we write  
 Believing eternal the frail vows we plight;  
 And we smile with a confident pity, above  
 The vulgar results of all poor human love:  
 For we deem, with that vanity common to  
 youth,

Because what we feel in our bosoms, in truth,  
 Is novel to us—that 'tis novel to earth,  
 And will prove the exception, in durance and  
 worth,

To the great law to which all on earth must  
incline.

The error was noble, the vanity fine.

Shall we blame it because we survive it? ah,  
no;

'Twas the youth of our youth, my lord, is it  
not so?''

## XII.

Lord Alfred was mute. He remember'd her  
yet

A child—the weak sport of each moment's re-  
gret,

Blindly yielding herself to the errors of life,  
The deceptions of youth, and borne down by  
the strife

And the tumult of passion; the tremulous toy  
Of each transient emotion of grief or of joy.

But to watch her pronounce the death-warrant  
of all

The illusions of life—lift, unflinching, the pall  
From the bier of the dead Past—that woman  
so fair,

And so young, yet her own self-survivor; who  
there

Traced her life's epitaph with a finger so cold!  
'Twas a picture that pain'd his self-love to be-  
hold.

He himself knew—none better—the things to  
be said

Upon subjects like this. Yet he bow'd down  
his head:

And as thus, with a trouble he could not com-  
mand,

He paused, crumpling the letters he held in his  
hand,

“You know me enough,” she continued, “or  
what

I would say is, you yet recollect (do you not,  
Lord Alfred?) enough of my nature, to know  
That these pledges of what was perhaps long  
ago

A foolish affection, I do not recall  
From those motives of prudence which actuate  
all

Or most women when their love ceases. In-  
deed,

If you have such a doubt, to dispel it I need  
But remind you that ten years these letters  
have rested

Unreclaim'd in your hands.” A reproach  
seem'd suggested

By these words. To meet it, Lord Alfred  
look'd up.

(His gaze had been fix'd on a blue Sevres cup  
With a look of profound connoisseurship—a  
smile

Of singular interest and care, all this while.)

He look'd up, and look'd long in the face of  
Lucile,

To mark if that face by a sign would reveal  
At the thought of Miss Darcy the least jealous  
pain.

He look'd keenly and long, yet he look'd there  
in vain.

“You are generous, Madam,” he murmur'd at  
last,

And into his voice a light irony pass'd.



He had look'd for reproaches, and fully arranged  
 His forces. But straightway the enemy  
     changed  
 The position.

## XIII.

“Come!” gayly Lucile interposed,  
 With a smile whose divinely deep sweetness  
     disclosed

Some depth in her nature he never had known,  
 While she tenderly laid her light hand on his  
     own,

“Do not think I abuse the occasion. We gain  
 Justice, judgment, with years, or else years  
     are in vain.

From me not a single reproach can you hear.  
 I have sinn'd to myself—to the world—nay, I  
     fear

To you chiefly. The woman who loves should,  
     indeed,

Be the friend of the man that she loves. She  
     should heed.

Not her selfish and often mistaken desires,  
 But his interest whose fate her own interest  
     inspires;

And, rather than seek to allure, for her sake,  
 His life down the turbulent, fanciful wake

Of impossible destinies, use all her art

That his place in the world find its place in her  
     heart.

I, alas!—I perceived not this truth till too late;  
 I tormented your youth, I have darken'd your  
     fate.

Forgive me the ill I have done for the sake  
Of its long expiation!"

## XIV.

Lord Alfred, awake  
Seem'd to wander from dream on to dream.

In that seat

Where he sat as a criminal, ready to meet  
His accuser, he found himself turn'd by some  
change,

As surprising and all unexpected as strange,  
To the judge from whose mercy indulgence  
was sought.

All the world's foolish pride in that moment  
was naught;

He felt all his plausible theories posed;  
And, thrill'd by the beauty of nature disclosed  
In the pathos of all he had witness'd, his head  
He bow'd, and faint words self-reproachfully  
said,

As he lifted her hand to his lips. 'Twas a hand  
White, delicate, dimpled, warm, languid, and  
bland.

The hand of a woman is often, in youth,  
Somewhat rough, somewhat red, somewhat  
graceless, in truth;

Does its beauty refine, as its pulses grow calm,  
Or as sorrow has cross'd the life-line in the  
palm?

## XV.

The more that he look'd, that he listen'd, the  
more

He discover'd perfections unnoticed before.  
Less saliant than once, less poetic, perchance,

This woman who thus had survived the romance  
That had made him its hero, and breathed him  
its sighs,  
Seem'd more charming a thousand times o'er  
to his eyes.

Together they talk'd of the years since when  
last

They parted, contrasting the present, the past.  
Yet no memory marr'd their light converse.

Lucile

Question'd much, with the interest a sister  
might feel

Of Lord Alfred's new life,—of Miss Darcy—  
her face,

Her temper, accomplishments — pausing to  
trace

The advantage derived from a hymen so fit.

Of herself, she recounted with humor and wit

Her journeys, her daily employments, the lands

She had seen, and the books she had read, and  
the hands

She had shaken.

In all that she said there appear'd

An amiable irony. Laughing, she rear'd

The temple of reason, with ever a touch

Of light scorn at her work, reveal'd only so  
much

As there gleams, in the thyrsus that Baccha-  
nals bear,

Through the blooms of a garland the point of  
a spear,

But above, and beneath, and beyond all of this,

To that soul, whose experience had paralyzed  
bliss,

A benignant indulgence, to all things resign'd,  
A justice, a sweetness, a meekness of mind,  
Gave a luminous beauty, as tender and faint  
And serene as the halo encircling a saint.

## XVI.

Unobserved by Lord Alfred the time fled by.  
To each novel sensation spontaneously  
He abandon'd himself with that ardor so  
    strange  
Which belongs to a mind grown accustom'd to  
    change.  
He sought, with well-practiced and delicate art,  
To surprise from Lucile the true state of her  
    heart;  
But his efforts were vain, and the woman as  
    ever,  
More adroit than the man, baffled every en-  
    deavor.  
When he deem'd he touch'd on some chord in  
    her being,  
At the touch it dissolved, and was gone. Ever  
    fleeing  
As ever he near it advanced, when he thought  
To have seized, and proceeded to analyze aught  
Of the moral existence, the absolute soul,  
Light as vapor the phantom escaped his con-  
    trol.

## XVII.

From the hall, on a sudden, a sharp ring was  
    heard.  
In the passage without a quick footstep there  
    stirr'd.

At the door knock'd the negress, and thrust in  
her head,

“The Duke de Luvois had just enter'd,” she  
said,

“And insisted”—

“The Duke!” cried Lucile (as she spoke,  
The Duke's step, approaching, a light echo  
woke).

“Say I do not receive till the evening. Ex-  
plain,”

As she glanced at Lord Alfred, she added again,  
“I have business of private importance.”

There came  
O'er Lord Alfred at once, at the sound of that  
name

An invincible sense of vexation. He turn'd  
To Lucile, and he fancied he faintly discern'd  
On her face an indefinite look of confusion.  
On his mind instantaneously flash'd the con-  
clusion

That his presence had caused it.

He said, with a sneer  
Which he could not repress, “Let not me inter-  
fere

With the claims on your time, lady! when you  
are free

From more pleasant engagements, allow me to  
see

And to wait on you later.”

The words were not said  
Ere he wish'd to recall them. He bitterly read  
The mistake he had made in Lucile's flashing  
eye.

Inclining her head, as in haughty reply,

More reproachful perchance than all utter'd  
 rebuke,  
 She said merely, resuming her seat, "Tell the  
 Duke  
 He may enter."

And vex'd with his own words and hers,  
 Alfred Vargrave bow'd low to Lucile de  
 Nevers,  
 Pass'd the casement and enter'd the garden.  
 Before  
 His shadow was fled the Duke stood at the door.

## XVIII.

When left to his thoughts in the garden alone,  
 Alfred Vargrave stood, strange to himself.

With dull tone  
 Of importance, through cities of rose and car-  
 nation,  
 Went the bee on his business from station to  
 station.

The minute mirth of summer was shrill all  
 around;

Its incessant small voices like stings seem'd to  
 sound

On his sore angry sense. He stood grieving  
 the hot

Solid sun with his shadow, nor stirr'd from the  
 spot

The last look of Lucile still bewilder'd, per-  
 plex'd,

And reproach'd him. The Duke's visit goaded  
 and vex'd.

He had not yet given the letters. Again  
 He must visit Lucile. He resolved to remain

Where he was till the Duke went. In short,  
he would stay,  
Were it only to know when the Duke went  
away.

But just as he form'd this resolve, he perceived  
Approaching toward him, between the thick-  
leaved

And luxuriant laurels, Lucile and the Duke.  
Thus surprised, his first thought was to seek  
for some nook

Whence he might, unobserved, from the gar-  
den retreat.

They had not yet seen him. The sound of  
their feet

And their voices had warn'd him in time. They  
were walking

Towards him. The Duke (a true Frenchman)  
was talking

With the action of Talma. He saw at a glance  
That they barr'd the sole path to the gateway.

No chance  
Of escape save an instant concealment! Deep-  
dipp'd

In thick foliage, an arbor stood near. In he  
slipp'd,

Saved from sight, as in front of that ambush  
they pass'd,

Still conversing. Beneath a laburnum at last  
They paused, and sat down on a bench in the  
shade,

So close that he could not but hear what they  
said.

## XIX.

LUCILE.

Duke, I scarcely conceive . . .

LUVOIS.

Ah, forgive! . . . I desired  
So deeply to see you to-day. You retired  
So early last night from the ball . . . this whole  
week

I have seen you pale, silent, preoccupied . . .  
speak,

Speak, Lucile, and forgive me! . . . I know  
that I am

A rash fool—but I love you! I love you,  
madame,

More than language can say! Do not deem,  
O Lucile,

That the love I no longer have strength to  
conceal

Is a passing caprice! It is strange to my  
nature,

It has made me, unknown to myself, a new  
creature.

I implore you to sanction and save the new life  
Which I lay at your feet with this prayer—Be  
my wife;

Stoop, and raise me!

Lord Alfred could scarcely restrain  
The sudden, acute pang of anger and pain  
With which he had heard this. As though to  
some wind

The leaves of the hush'd, windless laurels  
behind



The two thus in converse were suddenly stirr'd.  
The sound half betrayed him. They started.

He heard

The low voice of Lucile; but so faint was its  
tone

That her answer escaped him.

Luvois hurried on,

As though in remonstrance with what had  
been spoken.

“Nay, I know it, Lucile! but your heart was  
not broken

By the trial in which all its fibres were  
proved,

Love, perchance, you mistrust, yet you need  
to be loved,

You mistake your own feelings. I fear you  
mistake

What so ill I interpret, those feelings which  
make

Words like these vague and feeble. Whatever  
your heart

May have suffer'd of yore, this can only impart  
A pity profound to the love which I feel,

Hush! hush! I know all. Tell me nothing,  
Lucile.”

“You know all, Duke?” she said; “well, then,  
know that, is truth,

I have learn'd from the rude lesson taught to  
my youth

From my own heart to shelter my life: to  
mistrust

The heart of another. We are what we must,  
And not what we would be. I know that one

hour

Assures not another. The will and the power  
Are diverse."

"O madam!" he answer'd, "you fence  
With a feeling you know to be true and intense.  
'Tis not my life, Lucile, that I plead for alone:  
If your nature I know, 'tis no less for your  
own.

That nature will prey on itself; it was made  
To influence others. Consider," he said,  
"That genius craves power—what scope for it  
here?

Gifts less noble to me give command of that  
sphere

In which genius is power. Such gifts you  
despise?

But you do not disdain what such gifts realize!  
I offer you, Lady, a name not unknown—  
A fortune which worthless, without you, is  
grown—

All my life at your feet I lay down—at your  
feet

A heart which for you, and you only, can  
beat."

LUCILE.

That heart, Duke, that life—I respect both.  
The name

And position you offer, and all that you claim  
In behalf of their nobler employment, I feel  
To deserve what, in turn, I now ask you—

LUVOIS.

Lucile!

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me—

LUVVOIS.

You do not reject?

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me the time to reflect.

LUVVOIS.

You ask me?—

LUCILE.

—The time to reflect.

LUVVOIS.

Say—One word!

May I hope?

The reply of Lucile was not heard  
 By Lord Alfred; for just then she rose, and  
 moved on  
 The Duke bow'd his lips o'er her hand, and  
 was gone.

xx.

Not a sound save the birds in the bushes.  
 And when  
 Alfred Vargrave reel'd forth to the sunlight  
 again,  
 He just saw the white robe of the woman recede  
 As she enter'd the house.  
 Scarcely conscious indeed  
 Of his steps, he too follow'd, and enter'd.

xxi.

He enter'd  
 Unnoticed; Lucile never stirr'd: so concen-  
 tred  
 And wholly absorb'd in her thoughts she  
 appear'd.

Her back to the window was turn'd. As he  
 near'd  
 The sofa, her face from the glass was reflected.  
 Her dark eyes were fix'd on the ground. Pale,  
 dejected,  
 And lost in profound meditation she seem'd.  
 Softly, silently, over her droop'd shoulders  
 stream'd  
 The afternoon sunlight. The cry of alarm  
 And surprise which escaped her, as now on her  
 arm  
 Alfred Vargrave let fall a hand icily cold  
 And clammy as death, all too cruelly told  
 How far he had been from her thoughts.

## XXII.

All his cheek

Was disturb'd with the effort it cost him to  
 speak.  
 "It was not my fault. I have heard all," he  
 said.  
 "Now the letters—and farewell, Lucile! When  
 you wed  
 May—"

The sentence broke short, like a weapon that  
 snaps  
 When the weight of a man is upon it.

"Perhaps,"

Said Lucile (her sole answer reveal'd in the  
 flush  
 Of quick color which up to her brows seem'd  
 to rush  
 In reply to those few broken words), "this fare-  
 well

Is our last, Alfred Vargrave, in life. Who can  
tell?

Let us part without bitterness. Here are your  
letters.

Be assured I retain you no more in my fet-  
ters!"—

She laughed, as she said this, a little sad laugh.  
And stretched out her hand with the letters.

And half

Wroth to feel his wrath rise, and unable to  
trust

His own powers of restraint, in his bosom he  
thrust

The packet she gave, with a short angry sigh,  
Bow'd his head, and departed without a reply.

XXIII.

And Lucile was alone. And the men of the  
world

Were gone back to the world. And the world's  
self was furl'd

Far away from the heart of the woman. Her  
hand

Droop'd, and from it, unloosed from their frail  
silken band,

Fell those early love-letters, strewn, scatter'd,  
and shed

At her feet—life's lost blossoms! Dejected,  
her head

On her bosom was bow'd. Her gaze vaguely  
stray'd o'er

Those strewn records of passionate moments  
no more.

From each page to her sight leapt some word  
 that belied  
 The composure with which she that day had  
 denied  
 Every claim on her heart to those poor perish'd  
 years.  
 They avenged themselves now, and she burst  
 into tears.

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## CANTO V.

## I.

LETTER FROM COUSIN JOHN TO COUSIN ALFRED.

“BIGORRE, Thursday.

“Time up, you rascal! Come back, or be  
 hang'd.  
 Matilda grows peevish. Her mother har-  
 angued  
 For a whole hour this morning about you.  
 The deuce!  
 What on earth can I say to you?—nothing's of  
 use.  
 And the blame of the whole of your shocking  
 behavior  
 Falls on me, sir! Come back,—do you hear?  
 —or I leave your  
 Affairs, and abjure you forever. Come back  
 To your anxious betroth'd; and perplex'd  
 “COUSIN JACK.”

## II.

Alfred needed, in truth, no entreaties from  
 John  
 To increase his impatience to fly from Serchon.  
 All the place was now fraught with sensations  
 of pain  
 Which, whilst in it, he strove to escape from  
 in vain  
 A wild instinct warn'd him to fly from a place  
 Where he felt that some fatal event, swift of  
 pace,  
 Was approaching his life. In despite his  
 endeavor  
 To think of Matilda, her image forever  
 Was effaced from his fancy by that of Lucile.  
 From the ground which he stood on he felt  
 himself reel.  
 Scared, alarm'd by those feelings to which, on  
 the day  
 Just before, all his heart had so soon given  
 way,  
 When he caught, with a strange sense of fear,  
 for assistance  
 At what was, till then, the great fact in exist-  
 ence,  
 'Twas a phantom he grasp'd.

## III.

Having sent for his guide,  
 He order'd his horse, and determined to ride  
 Back forthwith to Bigorre.  
 Then, the guide, who well knew

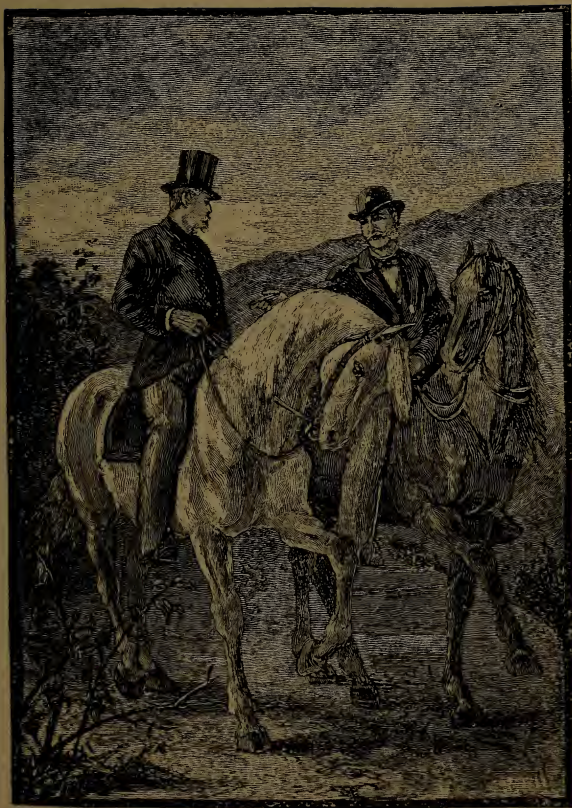
Every haunt of those hills, said the wild lake  
of Oo  
Lay a league from Serchon; and suggested a  
track  
By the lake to Bigorre, which, transversing the  
back  
Of the mountain, avoided a circuit between  
Two long valleys; and thinking, "Perchance  
change of scene  
May create change of thought," Alfred Var-  
grave agreed,  
Mounted horse, and set forth to Bigorre at full  
speed.

## IV.

His guide rode beside him.

The king of the guides!  
The gallant Bernard! ever boldly he rides,  
Ever gayly he sings! For to him, from of old,  
The hills have confided their secrets, and told  
Where the white partridge lies, and the cock  
o' the woods;  
Where the izard flits fine through the cold sol-  
itudes;  
Where the bear lurks perdu; and the lynx on  
his prey  
At nightfall descends, when the mountains are  
gray;  
Where the sassafra blooms, and the blue-bell  
is born,  
And the wild rhododendron first reddens at  
morn;  
Where the source of the waters is fine as a  
thread;





“ ‘ Pray take a cigar.’ ”—Page 42.

Lucile.



How the storm on the wild Maladetta is  
 spread;  
 Where the thunder is hoarded, the snows lie  
 asleep,  
 Whence the torrents are fed, and the cataracts  
 leap;  
 And, familiarly known in the hamlets, the  
 vales  
 Have whisper'd to him all their thousand love  
 tales;  
 He has laugh'd with the girls, he has leap'd  
 with the boys;  
 Ever blithe, ever bold, ever boon, he enjoys  
 An existence untroubled by envy or strife,  
 While he feeds on the dews and the juices of  
 life,  
 And so lightly he sings, and so gayly he rides,  
 For Bernard le Sauteur is the king of all guides!

## v.

But Bernard found, that day, neither song nor  
 love-tale,  
 Nor adventure, nor laughter, nor legend avail  
 To arouse from his deep and profound reverie  
 Him that silent beside him rode fast as could  
 be.

## vi.

Ascending the mountain they slacken'd their  
 pace,  
 And the marvelous prospect each moment  
 changed face.  
 The breezy and pure inspirations of morn

Breathed about them. The scrap'd, ravaged  
 mountains, all worn  
 By the torrents, whose course they watched  
 faintly meander,  
 Were alive with the diamonded shy salamander.  
 They paused o'er the bosom of purple abysses,  
 And wound through a region of green wilder-  
 nesses;  
 The waters went whirling above and around,  
 The forests hung heap'd in their shadows pro-  
 found,  
 Here the Larboust, and there Aventin, Castel-  
 lon,  
 Which the Demon of Tempest, descending  
 upon,  
 Had wasted with fire; and the peaceful Cazeaux  
 They mark'd, and far down in the sunshine  
 below,  
 Half dipp'd in a valley of airiest blue,  
 The white happy homes of the village of Oo,  
 Where the age is yet golden.

And high overhead  
 The wrecks of the combat of Titans were  
 spread.  
 Red granite and quartz, in the alchemic sun,  
 Fused their splendors of crimson and crystal  
 in one;  
 And deep in the moss gleam'd the delicate  
 shells,  
 And the dew linger'd fresh in the heavy hare-  
 bells;  
 The large violet burn'd; the campanula blue;  
 And Autumn's own flower, the saffron, peer'd  
 through

The red-berried brambles and thick sassafras;  
 And fragrant with thyme was the delicate  
 grass;

And high up, and higher, and highest of all,  
 The secular phantom of snow!

O'er the wall  
 Of a gray sunless glen gaping drowsy below,  
 That aerial specter, reveal'd in the glow  
 Of the great golden dawn, hovers faint on the  
 eye,

And appears to grow in, and grow out of the  
 sky,

And plays with the fancy, and baffles the sight.

Only reach'd by the vast rosy ripple of light,

And the cool star of eve, the Imperial Thing,

Half unreal, like some mythological king

That dominates all in a fable of old,

Takes command of a valley as fair to behold

As aught in old fables; and, seen or unseen,

Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and serene

Sacred sky, where the footsteps of spirits are  
 furl'd

'Mid the clouds beyond which spreads the infin-  
 ite world

Of man's last aspirations, unfathom'd, untrod,

Save by Even and Morn, and the angels of  
 God.

## VII.

Meanwhile, as they journey'd, that serpentine  
 road,

Now abruptly reversed, unexpectedly show'd  
 A gay cavalcade some few feet in advance.

Alfred Vargrave's heart beat; for he saw at a  
 glance  
 The slight form of Lucile in the midst. His  
 next look  
 Show'd him, joyously ambling beside her, the  
 Duke.  
 The rest of the troop which had thus caught  
 his ken  
 He knew not, nor noticed them (women and  
 men).  
 They were laughing and talking together.  
 Soon after  
 His sudden appearance suspended their laugh-  
 ter.

## VIII.

“You here! . . . I imagined you far on your  
 way  
 To Bigorre!” . . . said Lucile. “What has  
 caused you to stay?”  
 “I am on my way to Bigorre,” he replied,  
 “But, since my way would seem to be yours,  
 let me ride  
 For one moment beside you.” And then, with  
 a stoop  
 At her ear, . . . “and forgive me!”

## IX.

By this time the troop  
 Had regather'd its numbers.  
 Lucile was as pale  
 As the cloud 'neath their feet, on its way to  
 the vale.

The Duke had observed it, nor quitted her side,  
For even one moment, the whole of the ride.  
Alfred smiled as he thought, "he is jealous of  
her!"

And the thought of his jealousy added a spur  
To his firm resolution and effort to please.  
He talked much; was witty, and quite at his  
ease.

## x.

After noontide, the clouds, which had traversed  
the east

Half the day, gather'd closer, and rose and  
increased.

The air changed and chill'd. As though out  
of the ground

There ran up the trees a confused hissing sound,  
And the wind rose. The guides sniffed, like  
chamois, the air,

And look'd at each other, and halted, and there  
Unbuckled the cloaks from the saddles. The  
white

Aspens rustled, and turn'd up their frail leaves  
in fright.

All announced the approach of the tempest.

Ere long,  
Thick darkness descended the mountains  
among;

And a vivid, vindictive, and serpentine flash  
Gored the darkness, and shore it across with a  
gash.

The rain fell in large heavy drops. And anon  
Broke the thunder.

The horses took fright, everyone.  
 The Duke's in a moment was far out of sight.  
 The guides whoop'd. The band was obliged  
 to alight;  
 And, dispersed up the perilous pathway,  
 walk'd blind  
 To the darkness before from the darkness  
 behind.

## XI.

And the Storm is abroad in the mountains!  
He fills  
 The crouch'd hollows and all the oracular hills  
 With dread voices of power. A roused million  
 or more  
 Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from their hoary  
 Immemorial ambush, and roll in the wake  
 Of the cloud, whose reflection leaves vivid the  
 lake.  
 And the wind, that wild robber, for plunder  
 descends  
 From invisible lands, o'er those black moun-  
 tain ends;  
 He howls as he hounds down his prey; and his  
 lash  
 Tears the hair of the timorous wan mountain  
 ash,  
 That clings to the rocks, with her garments all  
 torn,  
 Like a woman in fear; then he blows his hoarse  
 horn  
 And is off the fierce guide of destruction and  
 terror,



Up the desolate heights, 'mid an intricate error  
Of mountain and mist.

## XII.

There is war in the skies  
Lo! the black-winged legions of tempest arise  
O'er those sharp splinter'd rocks that are  
gleaming below  
In the soft light, so fair and so fatal, as though  
Some seraph burn'd through them, the thun-  
der-bolt searching  
Which the black cloud unbosom'd just now.  
Lo! the lurching  
And shivering pine-trees, like phantoms, that  
seem  
To waver above, in the dark; and yon stream,  
How it hurries and roars, on its way to the  
white  
And paralyzed lake there, appall'd at the sight  
Of the things seen in heaven!

## XIII.

Through the darkness and awe  
That had gather'd around him, Lord Alfred  
now saw  
Reveal'd in the fierce and evanishing glare  
Of the lightning that momentarily pulsed through  
the air,  
A woman alone on a shelf of the hill,  
With her cheeks coldly propped on her hand,—  
and as still  
As the rock that she sat on, which beetled  
above

The black lake beneath her.

All terror, all love,  
Added speed to the instinct with which he  
rush'd on.

For one moment the blue lightning swathed  
the whole stone

In its lurid embrace: like the sleek dazzling  
snake

That encircles a sorceress charm'd for her sake  
And lull'd by her loveliness; fawning, it play'd  
And caressingly twined round the feet and the  
head

Of the woman who sat there, undaunted and  
calm

As the soul of that solitude, listing the psalm  
Of the plangent and laboring tempest roll slow  
From the caldron of midnight and vapor  
below,

Next moment from bastion to bastion, all  
around,

Of the siege-circled mountains, there tumbled  
the sound

Of the battering thunder's indefinite peal,  
And Lord Alfred had sprung to the feet of  
Lucile.

#### XIV.

She started. Once more, with its flickering  
wand,

The lightning approach'd her. In terror, her  
hand

Alfred Vargrave had seized within his; and he  
felt

The light fingers that coldly and lingering  
dwelt

In the grasp of his own, tremble faintly.

“See! See!

Where the whirlwind hath stricken and  
strangled yon tree!”

She exclaim’d, . . . “like the passion that  
brings on its breath,

To the being it embraces, destruction and  
death!

Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is around you!”

“Lucile!

I hear — I see — naught but yourself. I can  
feel

Nothing here but your presence. My pride  
fights in vain

With the truth that leaps from me. We two  
meet again

’Neath yon terrible heaven that is watching  
above

To avenge if I lie when I swear that I love,—  
And beneath yonder terrible heaven, at your  
feet

I humble my head and my heart. I entreat  
Your pardon, Lucile, for the past—I implore  
For the future your mercy—implore it with  
more

Of passion than prayer ever breathed. By the  
power

Which invisibly touches us both in this hour,  
By the rights I have o’er you, Lucile, I de-  
mand—”

“The rights!” . . . said Lucile, and drew  
from him her hand.

"Yes, the rights! for what greater to man  
 may belong  
 Than the right to repair in the future the  
 wrong  
 To the past? and the wrong I have done you,  
 of yore,  
 Hath bequeath'd to me all the sad right to  
 restore,  
 To retrieve, to amend! I, who injured your  
 life  
 Urge the right to repair it, Lucile! Be my  
 wife.  
 My guide, my good angel, my all upon earth,  
 And accept, for the sake of what yet may give  
 worth  
 To my life, its contrition!"

## xv.

He paused, for there came  
 O'er the cheek of Lucile a swift flush like the  
 flame  
 That illumined at moments the darkness o'er-  
 head.  
 With a voice faint and marr'd by emotion, she  
 said,  
 "And your pledge to another?"

## xvi.

"Hush, hush!" he exclaim'd,  
 "My honor will live where my love lives, un-  
 shamed.  
 'Twere poor honor indeed, to another to give  
 That life of which you keep the heart. Could  
 I live

In the light of those young eyes, suppressing  
a lie?

Alas, no! your hand holds my whole destiny.  
I can never recall what my lips have avow'd;  
In your love lies whatever can render me  
proud,

For the great crime of all my existence hath  
been

To have known you in vain. And the duty  
best seen,

And most hallow'd—the duty most sacred and  
sweet

Is that which hath led me, Lucile, to your  
feet.

O speak! and restore me the blessing I lost  
When I lost you—my pearl of all pearls beyond  
cost!

And restore to your own life its youth, and  
restore

The vision, the rapture, the passion of yore!  
Ere our brows had been dimm'd in the dust of  
the world,

When our souls their white wings yet exulting  
unfurl'd!

For your eyes rest no more on the unquiet  
man,

The wild star of whose course its pale orbit  
outran.

Whom the formless indefinite future of youth,  
With its lying allurements, distracted. In  
truth

I have wearily wander'd the world, and I feel  
That the least of your lovely regards, O Lu-  
cile,

Is worth all the world can afford, and the  
dream  
Which, though follow'd forever, forever doth  
seem  
As fleeting, and distant, and dim, as of yore  
When it brooded in twilight, at dawn, on the  
shore  
Of life's untraversed ocean! I know the sole  
path  
To repose, which my desolate destiny hath,  
Is the path by whose course to your feet I  
return.  
And who else, O Lucile, will so truly discern,  
And so deeply revere, all the passionate  
strength,  
The sublimity in you, as he whom at length  
These have saved from himself, for the truth  
they reveal  
To his worship?"

## XVII.

She spoke not; but Alfred could feel  
The light hand and arm, that upon him re-  
posed,  
Thrill and tremble. Those dark eyes of hers  
were half closed.  
But, under their languid mysterious fringe,  
A passionate softness was beaming. One  
tinge  
Of faint inward fire flush'd transparently  
through  
The delicate, pallid, and pure olive hue  
Of the cheek, half averted and droop'd. The  
rich bosom

Heaved, as when in the heart of a ruffled rose-  
blossom  
A bee is imprison'd and struggles.

## XVIII.

Meanwhile

The sun, in his setting, sent up the last smile  
Of his power, to baffle the storm. And behold!  
O'er the mountains embattled, his armies, all  
gold,  
Rose and rested; while far up the dim airy  
crag,  
Its artillery silenced, its banners in rags,  
The rear of the tempest its sullen retreat  
Drew off slowly, receding in silence, to meet  
The powers of the night, which, now gathering  
afar,  
Had already sent forward one bright, signal  
star.

The curls of her soft and luxuriant hair,  
From the dark riding-hat, which Lucile used  
to wear,  
Had escaped; and Lord Alfred now cover'd  
with kisses  
The redolent warmth of those long falling tres-  
ses.

Neither he, nor Lucile, felt the rain, which  
not yet  
Had ceased falling around them; when,  
splash'd, drench'd, and wet,  
The Duc de Luvois down the rough mountain  
course  
Approached them as fast as the road, and his  
horse

Which was limping, would suffer. The beast  
had just now  
Lost his footing, and over the perilous brow  
Of the storm-haunted mountain his master had  
thrown;  
But the Duke, who was agile, had leap'd to a  
stone,  
And the horse, being bred to the instinct which  
fills  
The breast of the wild mountaineer in these  
hills,  
Had scrambled again to his feet; and now  
master  
And horse bore about them the signs of disaster,  
As they heavily footed their way through the  
mist,  
The horse with his shoulder, the Duke with his  
wrist,  
Bruised and bleeding.

## XIX.

If ever your feet, like my own,  
O, reader, have traversed these mountains  
alone,  
Have you felt your identity shrink and contract  
At the sound of the distant and dim catátract,  
In the presence of nature's immensities? Say,  
Have you hung o'er the torrent, bedew'd with  
its spray,  
And, leaving the rock-way, contorted and  
roll'd,  
Like a huge couchant Typhon, fold heap'd over  
fold,



Track'd the summits from which every step  
that you tread  
Rolls the loose stones, with thunder below, to  
the bed  
Of invisible waters, whose mystical sound  
Fills with awful suggestions the dizzy pro-  
found?  
And, laboring onwards, at last through a break  
In the walls of the world, burst at once on the  
lake?  
If you have, this description I might have  
withheld.  
You remember how strangely your bosom has  
swell'd  
At the vision reveal'd. On the overwork'd soil  
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpen'd by toil;  
And one seems, by the pain of ascending the  
height,  
To have conquer'd a claim of that wonderful  
sight.

## xx.

Hail, virginal daughter of cold Espingo!  
Hail, Naiad, whose realm is the cloud and the  
snow;  
For o'er thee the angels have whiten'd their  
wings,  
And the thirst of the seraphs is quench'd at thy  
springs.  
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld thine ex-  
panse?  
When the breath of creation first fashion'd fair  
France,  
Did the Spirit of Ill in his downthrow appalling,

Bruise the world, and thus hollow thy basin  
 while falling?  
 Ere the mammoth was born hath some monster  
 unnamed  
 The base of thy mountainous pedestal framed?  
 And later, when Power to Beauty was wed,  
 Did some delicate fairy embroider thy bed  
 With the fragile valerian and wild columbine?

## XXI.

But the secret thou keepest, and I will keep  
 mine;  
 For once gazing on thee, it flash'd on my soul,  
 All that secret! I saw in a vision the whole  
 Vast design of the ages; what was and shall be!  
 Hands unseen raised the veil of a great mystery  
 For one moment. I saw, and I heard; and my  
 heart  
 Bore witness within me to infinite art,  
 In infinite power proving infinite love;  
 Caught the great choral chant, mark'd the  
 dread pageant move—  
 The divine Whence and Whither of life! But,  
 O daughter  
 Of Oo, not more safe in the deep silent water  
 Is thy secret, than mine in my heart. Even so.  
 What I then saw and heard, the world never  
 shall know.

## XXII.

The dimness of eve o'er the valleys had closed,  
 The rain had ceased falling, the mountains re-  
 posed.  
 The stars had enkindled in luminous courses

Their slow-sliding lamps, when, remounting  
 their horses,  
 The riders retraversed that mighty serration  
 Of rock-work. Thus left to its own desolation,  
 The lake, from whose glimmering limits the  
 last  
 Transient pomp of the pageants of sunset had  
 pass'd,  
 Drew into its bosom the darkness, and only  
 Admitted within it one image—a lonely  
 And tremulous phantom of flickering light  
 That follow'd the mystical moon through the  
 night.

## XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last they des-  
 cended,  
 To her chalet, in silence, Lord Alfred attended  
 Lucile. As they parted, she whispered him  
 low,  
 "You have made to me, Alfred, an offer I know  
 All the worth of, believe me. I cannot reply  
 Without time for reflection. Good-night!—not  
 good-by."  
 "Alas! 'tis the very same answer you made  
 To the Duc de Luvois but a day since," he  
 said.  
 "No, Alfred! the very same, no," she replied;  
 Her voice shook. "If you love me, obey me.  
 Abide  
 My answer, to-morrow."

## XXIV.

Alas, Cousin Jack!

You Cassandra in breeches and boots! turn your  
back  
To the ruins of Troy. Prophet, seek not for  
glory  
Amongst thine own people.  
I follow my story.

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## CANTO V.

## I.

Up!—forth again, Pegasus! — “Many’s the  
slip,”  
Hath the proverb well said, “twixt the cup and  
the lip!”  
How blest should we be, have I often con-  
ceived,  
Had we really achieved what we nearly  
achieved!  
We but catch at the skirts of the thing we  
would be,  
And fall back on the lap of a false destiny.  
So it will be, so has been, since this world be-  
gan!  
And the happiest, noblest, and best part of  
man  
Is the part which he never hath fully play’d  
out:  
For the first and last word in life’s volume is  
—Doubt  
The face the most fair to our vision allow’d

Is the face we encounter and lose in the crowd,  
The thought that most thrills our existence is  
one

Which, before we can frame it in language, is  
gone.

O Horace! the rustic still rests by the river,  
But the river flows on, and flows past him for-  
ever!

Who can sit down, and say . . . "What I will  
be, I will?"

Who stand up, and affirm . . . "What I was,  
I am still?"

Who is it that must not, if question'd, say . . .  
"What

I would have remain'd or become, I am not?"

We are ever behind, or beyond, or beside

Our intrinsic existence. Forever at hide

And seek with our souls. Not in Hades alone

Doth Sisyphus roll, ever frustrate, the stone,

Do the Danaids ply, ever vainly, the sieve.

Tasks as futile does earth to its denizens give.

Yet there's none so unhappy, but what he hath  
been

Just about to be happy, at some time, I ween;

And none so beguiled and defrauded by  
chance,

But what once in his life, some minute circum-  
stance

Would have fully sufficed to secure him the  
bliss

Which, missing it then, he forever must miss.

And to most of us, ere we go down to the grave,

Life, relenting, accords the good gift we would  
have;

But, as though by some strange imperfection  
in fate,

The good gift, when it comes, comes a moment  
too late.

The Future's great veil our breath fitfully flaps,  
And behind it broods ever the mighty Perhaps.  
Yet! there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the  
lip;

But while o'er the brim of life's beaker I dip,  
Though the cup may next moment be shat-  
ter'd, the wine

Spilt, one deep health I'll pledge, and that  
health shall be thine,

O being of beauty and bliss! seen and known  
In the depths of my soul, and possess'd there  
alone!

My days know thee not; and my lips name thee  
never,

Thy place in my poor life is vacant forever.

We have met; we have parted. No more is  
recorded

In my annals on earth. This alone was ac-  
corded

To the man whom men know me, or deem me,  
to be.

But, far down, in the depth of my life's mys-  
tery,

(Like the siren that under the deep ocean  
dwells,

Whom the wind as it wails, and the wave as it  
swells,

Cannot stir in the calm of her coraline halls,  
'Mid the world's adamantine and dim pedes-  
tals;

At whose feet sit the sylphs and sea fairies;  
for whom

The almondine glimmers, the soft samphires  
bloom)—

Thou abidest and reignest forever, O Queen  
Of that better world which thou swayest un-  
seen!

My one perfect mistress! my all things in all!  
Thee by no vulgar name known to men do I  
call:

For the Seraphs have named thee to me in my  
sleep,

And that name is a secret I sacredly keep.  
But, wherever this nature of mine is most fair,  
And its thoughts are the purest—belov'd,  
thou are there!

And whatever is noblest in aught that I do,  
Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.

The world gave thee not to me, no! and the  
world

Cannot take thee away from me now. I have  
furl'd

The wings of my spirit about thy bright head;  
At thy feet are my soul's immortalities spread.  
Thou mightest have been to me much. Thou  
art more.

And in silence I worship, in darkness adore.

If life be not that which, without us, we find  
Chance, accident, merely—but rather the mind,  
And the soul which, within us, surviveth these  
things,

If our real existence have truly its springs  
Less in that which we do than in that which  
we feel,

Not in vain do I worship, not hopeless I kneel!  
 For then, though I name thee not mistress or  
     wife,  
 Thou art mine—and mine only, O life of my  
     life!  
 And though many's the slip 'twixt the cup and  
     the lip,  
 Yet while o'er the brim of life's beaker I dip,  
 While there's life on the lip, while there's  
     warmth in the wine,  
 One deep health I'll pledge, and that health  
     shall be thine!

## II.

This world, on whose peaceable breast we re-  
     pose  
 Unconvulsed by alarm, once confused in the  
     throes  
 Of a tumult divine, sea and land, moist and  
     dry,  
 And in fiery fusion commix'd earth and sky.  
 Time cool'd it, and calm'd it, and taught it to  
     go  
 The round of its orbit in peace, long ago.  
 The wind changeth and whirleth continually:  
 All the rivers run down and run into the sea:  
 The wind whirleth about, and is presently  
     still'd:  
 All the rivers run down, yet the sea is not fill'd:  
 The sun goeth forth from his chambers: the  
     sun  
 Ariseth, and lo ! he descendeth anon.  
 All returns to its place. Use and Habit are  
     powers



Far stronger than Passion, in this world of  
ours.

The great laws of life readjust their infraction,  
And to every emotion appoint a reaction.

## III.

Alfred Vargrave had time, after leaving  
Lucile,

To review the rash step he had taken, and feel  
What the world would have called "his erro-  
neous position."

Thought obruded its claim, and enforced  
recognition:

Like a creditor who, when the gloss is worn  
out

On the coat which we once wore with pleasure,  
no doubt,

Sends us in his account for the garment we  
bought.

Ev'ry spendthrift to passion is debtor to  
thought.

## IV.

He felt ill at ease with himself. He could feel  
Little doubt what the answer would be from  
Lucile.

Her eyes when they parted—her voice, when  
they met,

Still enraptured his heart, which they haunted,  
and yet

Though, exulting, he deem'd himself loved,  
where he loved,

Through his mind a vague self-accusation there  
moved.

O'er his fancy, when fancy was fairest, would  
rise

The infantine face of Matilda, with eyes  
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,  
That his heart fail'd within him. In vain did  
he find

A thousand just reasons for what he had done:  
The vision that troubled him would not be gone.  
In vain did he say to himself, and with truth,  
"Matilda has beauty, and fortune, and youth;  
And her heart is too young to have deeply in-  
volved

All its hopes in the tie which must now be dis-  
solved,

'Twere a false sense of honor in me to sup-  
press

The sad truth which I owe it to her to confess.  
And what reason have I to presume this poor  
life

Of my own, with its languid and frivolous strife,  
And without what alone might endear it to her,  
Were a boon all so precious, indeed, to confer,  
Its withdrawal can wrong her?

It is not as though

I were bound to some poor village maiden, I  
know,

Unto whose simple heart mine were all upon  
earth,

Or to whose simple fortunes my own could give  
worth.

Matilda, in all the world's gifts, will not miss  
Aught that I could procure her. 'Tis best as  
it is!"

## v.

In vain did he say to himself, "When I came  
To this fatal spot, I had nothing to blame  
Or reproach myself for, in the thoughts of my  
heart.

I could not foresee that its pulses would start  
Into such strange emotion on seeing once more  
A woman I left with indifference before.

I believed, and with honest conviction believed,  
In my love for Matilda. I never conceived  
That another could shake it. I deem'd I had  
done

With the wild heart of youth, and looked hope-  
fully on

To the soberer manhood, the worthier life,  
Which I sought in the love that I vow'd to my  
wife.

Poor child! she shall learn the whole truth.  
She shall know

What I knew not myself but a few days ago.  
The world will console her—her pride will  
support—

Her youth will renew its emotions. In short,  
There is nothing in me that Matilda will miss  
When once we have parted. 'Tis best as it  
is!"

## vi.

But in vain did he reason and argue. Alas!  
He yet felt unconvinced that 'twas best as it  
was.

Out of reach of all reason, forever would rise  
That infantine face of Matilda, with eyes

So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,  
That they harrow'd his heart and distracted  
his mind.

## VII.

And then, when he turned from these thoughts  
to Lucile,  
Though his heart rose enraptured he could not  
but feel

A vague sense of awe of her nature. Behind  
All the beauty of heart, and the graces of mind,  
Which he saw and revered in her, something  
unknown

And unseen in that nature still troubled his  
own.

He felt that Lucile penetrated and prized  
Whatever was noblest and best, though dis-  
guised,

In himself; but he did not feel sure that he  
knew,

Or completely possess'd, what, half hidden  
from view,

Remain'd lofty and lonely in her.

Then, her life,  
So untamed, and so free! would she yield as a  
wife,

Independence, long claimed as a woman? Her  
name,

So link'd by the world with that spurious fame  
Which the beauty and wit of a woman assert,  
In some measure, alas! to her own loss and  
hurt

In the serious thoughts of a man! . . . This  
reflection

O'er the love which he felt cast a shade of  
dejection,  
From which he forever escaped to the thought  
Doubt could reach not . . . "I love her, and  
all else is naught!

## VIII.

His hand trembled strangely in breaking the  
seal  
Of the letter which reach'd him at last from  
Lucile.  
At the sight of the very first words that he  
read,  
That letter dropp'd down from his hand like  
the dead  
Leaf in autumn, that, falling, leaves naked  
and bare  
A desolate tree in a wide wintry air.  
He pass'd his hand hurriedly over his eyes,  
Bewilder'd, incredulous. Angry surprise  
And dismay in one sharp moan, broke from  
him, Anon  
He pick'd up the page and read rapidly on

## IX.

THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO LORD ALFRED  
VARGRAVE:

"No, Alfred!

If over the present, when last  
We two met, rose the glamour and mist of the  
past,  
It hath now rolled away, and our two paths are  
plain,

And those two paths divide us.

“That hand which again  
Mine one moment has clasp'd as the hand of a  
brother,

That hand and your honor are pledged to  
another!

Forgive, Alfred Vargrave, forgive me, if yet  
For that moment (now past!) I have made you  
forget

What was due to yourself and that other one.

Yes,

Mine the fault, and be mine the repentance.

Not less,

In now owning this fault, Alfred, let me own,  
too,

I foresaw not the sorrow involved in it.

“True,  
That meeting, which hath been so fatal, I  
sought,

I alone! But, oh, deem not it was with the  
thought

Of your heart to regain, or the past to awaken.

No! believe me, it was with the firm and  
unshaken

Conviction, at least, that our meeting would  
be

Without peril to you, although haply to me

The salvation of all my existence.

“I own,  
When the rumor first reach'd me, which lightly  
made known

To the world your engagement, my heart and  
my mind

Suffer'd torture intense. It was cruel to find

That so much of the life of my life, half  
unknown

To myself, had been silently settled on one  
Upon whom but to think it would soon be a  
crime.

Then I said to myself, 'From the thralldom  
which time

Hath not weaken'd there rests but one hope of  
escape.

That image which Fancy seems ever to shape  
From the solitude left round the ruins of yore,  
Is a phantom. The Being I loved is no more.  
What I hear in the silence, and see in the lone  
Void of life, is the young hero born of my own  
Perish'd youth: and his image, serene and  
sublime,

In my heart rests unconscious of change and  
of time

Could I see it but once more, as time and as  
change

Have made it, a thing unfamiliar and strange,  
See, indeed, that the Being I loved in my youth  
Is no more, and what rests now is only, in  
truth,

The hard pupil of life and the world: then,  
oh, then,

I should wake from a dream, and my life be  
again

Reconciled to the world; and, released from  
regret,

Take the lot fate accords to my choice.'

“So we met

But the danger I did not foresee has occur'd;  
The danger, alas, to yourself! I have err'd.

But happy for both that this error hath been  
Discover'd as soon as the danger was seen!

We meet, Alfred Vargrave, no more. I,  
indeed,

Shall be far from Serchon when this letter you  
read.

My course is decided; my path I discern:  
Doubt is over; my future is fix'd now.

“Return,  
O return to the young living love! Whence,  
alas!

If, one moment, you wander'd, think only it  
was

More deeply to bury the past love.

“And, oh!  
Believe, Alfred Vargrave, that I, where I go  
On my far distant pathway through life, shall  
rejoice

To treasure in memory all that your voice  
Has avow'd to me, all in which others have  
clothed

To my fancy with beauty and worth your  
betrothed!

In the fair morning light, in the orient dew  
Of that young life, now yours, can you fail to  
renew

All the noble and pure aspirations, the truth,  
The freshness, the faith, of your own earnest  
youth?

Yes! you will be happy. I, too, in the bliss  
I foresee for you, I shall be happy. And this  
Proves me worthy your friendship. And so—  
let it prove

That I cannot—I do not—respond to your love.



Yes, indeed! be convinced that I could not  
(no, no,  
Never, never!) have render'd you happy.  
And so,  
Rest assured that, if false to the vows you  
have plighted,  
You would have endured, when the first brief,  
excited  
Emotion was o'er, not alone the remorse  
Of honor, but also (to render it worse)  
Disappointed affection.

“Yes, Alfred; you start?

But think! if the world was too much in your  
heart,  
And too little in mine, when we parted ten  
years  
Ere this last fatal meeting, that time (ay, and  
tears!)  
Have but deepen'd the old demarcations  
which then  
Placed our natures asunder; and we two again,  
As we then were, would still have been  
strangely at strife.  
In that self-independence which is to my life  
Its necessity now, as it once was its pride,  
Had our course through the world been hence-  
forth side by side,  
I should have revolted forever, and shock'd  
Your respect for the world's plausibilities,  
mock'd,  
Without meaning to do so, and outraged, all  
those  
Social creeds which you live by.

“Oh! do not suppose

That I blame you. Perhaps it is you that are  
right.

Best, then, all as it is!

“Deem these words life’s Good-night  
To the hope of a moment: no more! If there  
fell

Any tear on this page, ’twas a friend’s.

“So farewell  
To the past—and to you, Alfred Vargrave.

“LUCILE.”

x.

So ended that letter.

The room seem’d to reel  
Round and round in the mist that was scorch-  
ing his eyes

With a fiery dew. Grief, resentment, surprise,  
Half choked him; each word he had read, as  
it smote

Down some hope, rose and grasped like a  
hand at his throat

To stifle and strangle him.

Gasping already  
For relief from himself, with a footstep  
unsteady,

He pass’d from his chamber. He felt both  
oppress’d

And excited. The letter he thrust in his breast,  
And, in search of fresh air and of solitude,  
pass’d

The long lime-trees of Serchon. His footsteps  
at last

Reach’d a bare narrow heath by the skirts of a  
wood:

It was somber and silent, and suited his mood.  
 By a mineral spring, long unused, now un-  
 known,  
 Stood a small ruin'd abbey. He reach'd it,  
 sat down  
 On a fragment of stone, 'mid the wild weed  
 and thistle  
 And read over again that perplexing epistle.

## XI.

In re-reading that letter, there roll'd from his  
 mind  
 The raw mist of resentment which first made  
 him blind  
 To the pathos breath'd through it. Tears rose  
 in his eyes,  
 And a hope sweet and strange in his heart  
 seem'd to rise.  
 The truth which he saw not the first time he  
 read  
 That letter, he now saw—that each word  
 betray'd  
 The love which the writer had sought to con-  
 ceal.  
 His love was received not, he could not but feel,  
 For one reason alone,—that his love was not  
 free.  
 True! free yet he was not: but could he not  
 be  
 Free erelong, free as air to revoke that fare-  
 well,  
 And to sanction his own hopes? he had but to  
 tell  
 The truth to Matilda, and she were the first

To release him: he had but to wait at the  
worst.

Matilda's relations would probably snatch  
Any pretext, with pleasure, to break off a  
match

In which they had yielded, alone at the whim  
Of their spoil'd child, a languid approval to  
him.

She herself, careless child! was her love for  
him aught

Save the first joyous fancy succeeding the  
thought

She last gave to her doll? was she able to feel  
Such a love as the love he divined in Lucile?

He would seek her, obtain his release, and, oh!  
then,

He had but to fly to Lucile, and again  
Claim the love which his heart would be free  
to command.

But to press on Lucile any claim to her hand,  
Or even to seek, or to see her, before

He could say, "I am free; free, Lucile, to im-  
plore

That great blessing on life you alone can con-  
fer,"

'Twere dishonor in him, 'twould be insult to  
her.

Thus still with the letter outspread on his  
knee

He follow'd so fondly his own revery,  
That he felt not the angry regard of a man  
Fix'd upon him; he saw not a face stern and  
wan

Turn'd toward him; he heard not a footstep  
 that pass'd  
 And repass'd the lone spot where he stood, till  
 at last  
 A hoarse voice aroused him.

He look'd up and saw,  
 On the bare heath before him, the Duc de  
 Luvois.

## XII.

With aggressive ironical tones, and a look  
 Of concentrated insolent challenge, the Duke  
 Addressed to Lord Alfred some sneering allu-  
 sion  
 To "the doubtless sublime reveries his intru-  
 sion  
 Had, he fear'd, interrupted. Milord would do  
 better,  
 He fancied, however, to fold up a letter  
 The writing of which was too well known, in  
 fact,  
 His remark as he pass'd to have failed to  
 attract."

## XIII.

It was obvious to Alfred the Frenchman was  
 bent  
 Upon picking a quarrel! and doubtless 'twas  
 meant  
 From him to provoke it by sneers such as these.  
 A moment sufficed his quick instinct to seize  
 The position. He felt that he could not expose  
 His own name, or Lucile's, or Matilda's, to  
 those

Idle tongues that would bring down upon him  
the ban

Of the world, if he now were to fight with this  
man.

And indeed when he look'd in the Duke's hag-  
gard face

He was pain'd by the change there he could  
not but trace.

And he almost felt pity.

He therefore put by

Each remark of the Duke with some careless  
reply,

And coldly, but courteously, waving away  
The ill-humor the Duke seem'd resolved to  
display,

Rose, and turn'd, with a stern salutation, aside.

XIV.

Then the Duke put himself in the path, made  
one stride

In advance, raised a hand, fixed upon him his  
eyes,

And said . . .

“Hold, Lord Alfred! Away with disguise!

I will own that I sought you a moment ago,

To fix on you a quarrel. I still can do so

Upon my excuse. I prefer to be frank.

I admit not a rival in fortune or rank

To the hand of a woman, whatever be hers

Or her suitor's. I love the Comtesse de Nevers.

I believed, ere you cross'd me, and still have

the right

To believe, that she would have been mine.

To her sight

You return, and the woman is suddenly  
changed.

You step in between us: her heart is estranged.  
You! who now are betrothed to another, I  
know;

You! whose name with Lucile's nearly ten  
years ago

Was coupled by ties which you broke: you!  
the man

I reproach'd on the day our acquaintance  
began.

You! that left her so lightly,—I cannot believe  
That you love, as I love, her; nor can I con-  
ceive

You, indeed, have the right so to love her.

Milord,

I will not thus tamely concede, at your word,  
What, a few days ago, I believed to be mine!  
I shall yet persevere: I shall yet be, in fine,  
A rival you dare not despise. It is plain  
That to settle this contest there can but remain  
One way—need I say what it is?"

xv.

Not unmoved  
With regretful respect for the earnestness  
proved

By the speech he had heard, Alfred Vargrave  
replied

In words which he trusted might yet turn aside  
The quarrel from which he felt bound to  
abstain,

And, with stately urbanity, strove to explain

To the Duke that he too (a fair rival at worst!)  
Had not been accepted.

## XVI.

“Accepted! say first  
Are you free to have offer’d?”

Lord Alfred was mute.

## XVII.

“Ah, you dare not reply!” cried the Duke,  
“Why dispute,  
Why palter with me? You are silent! and  
why?”

Because, in your conscience, you cannot deny  
’Twas from the vanity, wanton and cruel  
withal,

And the wish and ascendancy lost to recall,  
That you stepp’d in between me and her. If,  
milord,

You be really sincere, I ask only one word.  
Say at once you renounce her. At once on  
my part,

I will ask your forgiveness with all truth of  
heart,

And there can be no quarrel between us. Say  
on!”

Lord Alfred grew gall’d and impatient. This  
tone

Roused a strong irritation he could not repress.  
“You have not the right, sir,” he said, “and  
still less

The power, to make terms and conditions with  
me.

I refuse to reply.”



## XVIII.

As diviners may see  
Fates they cannot avert in some figure occult,  
He foresaw in a moment each evil result  
Of the quarrel now imminent.

There, face to face,  
Mid the ruins and tombs of a long-perish'd  
race,  
With, for witness, the stern Autumn Sky over-  
head,  
And beneath them, unnoticed, the graves, and  
the dead,  
Those two men had met, as it were on the  
ridge  
Of that perilous, narrow, invisible bridge  
Dividing the Past from the Future, so small  
That if one should pass over, the other must  
fall.

## XIX.

On the ear, at that moment, the sound of a  
hoof,  
Urged with speed, sharply smote; and from  
under the roof  
Of the forest in view, where the skirts of it  
verged  
On the heath where they stood, at full gallop  
emerged  
A horseman.

A guide appear'd, by the sash  
Of red silk round the waist, and the long  
leathern lash

With the short wooden handle, slung crosswise  
 behind  
 The short jacket; the loose canvas trouser,  
 confined  
 By the long boots; the woolen capote; and  
 the rein,  
 A mere hempen cord on a curb.

Up the plain

He wheel'd his horse, white with the foam on  
 his flank,  
 Leap'd the rivulet lightly, turn'd sharp from  
 the bank,  
 And, approaching the Duke, raised his woolen  
 capote,  
 Bow'd low in the selle, and deliver'd a note. .

## xx.

The two stood astonish'd.     The Duke, with a  
 gest  
 Of apology, turn'd, stretch'd his hand and pos-  
 sess'd  
 Himself of the letter, changed color, and tore  
 The page open and read.

Ere a moment was o'er

His whole aspect changed.     A light rose to his  
 eyes,  
 And a smile to his lips.     While with startled  
 surprise  
 Lord Alfred yet watch'd him, he turn'd on his  
 heel,  
 And said gayly, "A pressing request from  
 Lucile!  
 You are quite right, Lord Alfred! fair rivals  
 at worst,

Our relative place may perchance be reversed.  
 You are not accepted,—nor free to propose!  
 I, perchance, am accepted already: who knows?  
 I had warn'd you, milord, I should still perse-  
 vere.

This letter—but stay! you can read it—look  
 here!"

## XXI.

It was now Alfred's turn to feel roused and  
 enraged.

But Lucile to himself was not pledged or en-  
 gaged

By aught that could sanction resentment. He  
 said

Not a word, but turn'd round, took the letter,  
 and read . . .

THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO THE DUC DE LUVOIS.

“SAINT SAVIOUR.

“Your letter, which follow'd me here, makes  
 me stay

Till I see you again. With no moment's delay  
 I entreat, I conjure you, by all that you feel  
 Or profess, to come to me directly.

LUCILE.”

## XXII.

“Your letter!” He then had been writing to  
 her!

Coldly shrugging his shoulders, Lord Alfred  
 said, “Sir,

Do not let me detain you!"

The Duke smiled and bow'd;  
Placed the note in his bosom; address'd, half  
aloud,  
A few words to the messenger. . . . "Say your  
dispatch  
Will be answer'd ere nightfall;" then glanced  
at his watch,  
And turn'd back to the Baths.

XXIII.

Alfred Vargrave stood still,  
Torn, distracted in heart, and divided in will.  
He turn'd to Lucile's farewell letter to him,  
And read over her words; rising tears made  
them dim;  
"Doubt is over: my future is fix'd now," they  
said,  
"My course is decided." Her course? what!  
to wed  
With this insolent rival! With that thought  
there shot  
Through his heart an acute jealous anguish.  
But not  
Even thus could his clear worldly sense quite  
excuse  
Those strange words to the Duke. She was  
free to refuse  
Himself, free the Duke to accept, it was true;  
Even then, though, this eager and strange  
rendezvous,  
How imprudent! To some unfrequented lone  
inn,

And so late (for the night was about to begin)—  
 She, companionless there!—had she bidden  
 that man?

A fear, vague, and formless, and horrible, ran  
 Through his heart.

## XXIV.

At that moment he look'd up, and saw,  
 Riding fast through the forest, the Duc de  
 Luvois,

Who waved his hand to him, and sped out of  
 sight.

The day was descending. He felt 'twould be  
 night

Ere that man reached Saint Saviour.

## XXV.

He walk'd on, but not  
 Back toward Serchon; he walk'd on, but knew  
 not in what

Direction, nor yet with what object, indeed,  
 He was walking but still he walk'd on without  
 heed.

## XXVI.

The day had been sullen; but, towards his de-  
 cline,

The sun sent a stream of wild light up the  
 pine.

Darkly denting the red light reveal'd at its  
 back,

The old ruin'd abbey rose roofless and black,  
 The spring that yet oozed through the moss-  
 paven floor,

Had suggested, no doubt, to the monks there,  
 of yore,

The sight of that refuge where, back to its  
 God,  
 How many a heart, now at rest 'neath the sod,  
 Had borne from the world all the same wild  
 unrest  
 That now prey'd on his own!

## XXVII.

By the thoughts in his breast  
 With varying impulse divided and torn,  
 He traversed the scant heath, and reach'd the  
 forlorn  
 Autumn woodland, in which but a short while  
 ago  
 He had seen the Duke rapidly enter; and so  
 He too enter'd. The light waned around him,  
 and pass'd  
 Into darkness. The wrathful, red Occident  
 cast  
 One glare of vindictive inquiry behind,  
 As the last light of day from the high wood  
 declined,  
 And the great forest sigh'd its farewell to the  
 beam  
 And far off on the stillness the voice of the  
 stream  
 Fell faintly.

## XXVIII.

O Nature, how fair is thy face,  
 And how light is thy heart, and how friendless  
 thy grace!  
 Thou false mistress of man! thou dost sport  
 with him lightly

In his hours of ease and enjoyment; and  
brightly  
Dost thou smile to his smile; to his joys thou  
inclinest,  
But his sorrows, thou knowest them not, nor  
divinest.  
While he woos, thou art wanton; thou lettest  
him love thee;  
But thou art not his friend, for his grief cannot  
move thee;  
And at last, when he sickens and dies, what  
lost thou?  
All as gay are thy garments, as careless thy  
brow.  
And thou laughest and toiest with any new-  
comer,  
Not a tear more for winter, a smile less for  
summer!  
Hast thou never an anguish to heave the heart  
under  
That fair breast of thine, O thou feminine  
wonder  
For all those—the young, and the fair, and the  
strong,  
Who have loved thee, and lived with thee  
gayly and long,  
And who now on thy bosom lie dead? and their  
deeds  
And their days are forgotten! O hast thou no  
weeds  
And not one year of mourning,—one out of the  
many  
That deck thy new bridals forever,—nor any

Regrets for thy lost loves, conceal'd from the  
new  
O thou widow of earth's generations? Go to!  
If the sea and the night wind know aught of  
these things,  
They do not reveal it. We are not thy kings.

---

## CANTO VI.

## I.

“The huntsman has ridden too far on the  
chase,  
And eldritch, and eerie, and strange is the  
place!  
The castle betokens a date long gone by.  
He crosses the courtyard with curious eye:  
He wanders from chamber to chamber, and yet  
From strangeness to strangeness his footsteps  
are set;  
And the whole place grows wilder and wilder,  
and less  
Like aught seen before. Each in absolute  
dress,  
Strange portraits regard him with looks of sur-  
prise,  
Strange forms from the arras start forth to his  
eyes,  
Strange epigraphs, blazon'd, burn out of the  
wall:  
The spell of a wizard is over it all.  
In her chamber, enchanted, the Princess is  
sleeping



The sleep which for centuries she has been  
     keeping  
 If she smile in her sleep, it must be to some  
     lover  
 Whose lost golden locks the long grasses now  
     cover:  
 If she moan in her dream, it must be to de-  
     plore  
 Some grief which the world cares to hear of no  
     more.  
 But how fair is her forehead, how calm seems  
     her cheek!  
 And how sweet must that voice be, if once she  
     would speak!  
 He looks and he loves her; but knows he (not  
     he!)  
 The clew to unravel this old mystery?  
 And he stoops to those shut lips. The shapes  
     on the wall,  
 The mute men in armor around him, and all  
 The weird figures frown, as though striving to  
     say,  
 'Halt! invade not the Past, reckless child of  
     To-day!  
 And give not, O madman! the heart in thy  
     breast  
 To a phantom, the soul of whose sense is pos-  
     sess'd  
 By an Age not thine own!'

"But unconscious is he,  
 And he heeds not the warning, he cares not to  
     see  
 Aught but one form before him!  
     "Rash, wild words are o'er,

And the vision is vanish'd from sight evermore!  
 And the gray morning sees, as it drearily  
     moves  
 O'er a land long deserted, a madman that  
     roves  
 Through a ruin, and seeks to recapture a  
     dream,  
 Lost to life and its uses, withdrawn from the  
     scheme  
 Of man's walking existence, he wanders  
     apart."

And this is an old fairy-tale of the heart.  
 It is told in all lands, in a different tongue;  
 Told with tears by the old, heard with smiles  
     by the young.  
 And the tale to each heart unto which it is  
     known  
 Has a different sense. It has puzzled my own.

## II.

Eugene de Luvois was a man who, in part  
 From strong physical health, and that vigor of  
     heart  
 Which physical health gives, and partly, per-  
     chance,  
 From a generous vanity native to France,  
 With the heart of a hunter, whatever the quarry;  
 Pursued it, too hotly impatient to tarry  
 Or turn, till he took it. His trophies were  
     trifles:  
 But trifler he was not. When rose-leaves it  
     rifles,  
 No less than when oak-trees it ruins, the wind  
 Its pleasures pursues with impetuous mind.

Both Eugene de Luvois and Lord Alfred had  
been

Men of pleasure: but men's pleasant vices,  
which, seen

Floating faint, in the sunshine of Alfred's soft  
mood,

Seem'd amiable foibles, by Luvois pursued  
With impetuous passion, seemed semi-Satanic.  
Half-pleas'd you see brooks play with pebbles;  
in panic

You watch them whirl'd down by the torrent.

In truth,

To the sacred political creed of his youth

The century which he was born to denied

All realization. Its generous pride

To degenerate protest on all things was sunk;

Its principles each to a prejudice shrunk.

Down the path of a life that led nowhere he  
trod,

Where his whims were his guides, and his will  
was his god,

And his pastime his purpose.

From boyhood possess'd

Of inherited wealth, he had learned to invest  
Both his wealth and those passions wealth frees  
from the cage

Which penury locks, in each vice of an age

All the virtues of which, by the creed he re-  
vered,

Were to him illegitimate.

Thus, he appear'd

To the world what the world chose to have him  
appear,—

The frivolous tyrant of Fashion, a mere

Reformer in coats, cards, and carriages! Still  
 'Twas the vigor of nature, and tension of will,  
 That found for the first time—perhaps for the  
 last—

In Lucile what they lacked yet to free from the  
 Past,  
 Force, and faith, in the Future.

And so, in his mind,  
 To the anguish of losing the woman was join'd  
 The terror of missing his life's destination.  
 Which in her had its mystical representation.

## III.

And truly, the thought of it, scaring him, pass'd  
 O'er his heart, while he now through the twi-  
 light rode fast

As a shade from the wing of some great bird  
 obscene

In a wide silent land may be suddenly seen,  
 Darkening over the sands, where it startles and  
 scares

Some traveler stray'd in the waste unawares,  
 So that thought more than once darken'd over  
 his heart

For a moment, and rapidly seem'd to depart.  
 Fast and furious he rode through the thickets  
 which rose

Up the shaggy hillside: and the quarreling  
 crows

Clang'd above him, and clustering down the  
 dim air

Droop'd into the dark woods. By fits here and  
 there

Shepherd fires faintly gleam'd from the valleys. Oh, how  
He envied the wings of each wild bird, as now  
He urged the steed over the dizzy ascent  
Of the mountain! Behind him a murmur was sent  
From the torrent—before him a sound from the tracts  
Of the woodlands that waved o'er the wild cat-  
aracts,  
And the loose earth and loose stones roll'd momentarily down  
From the hoofs of his steed to abysses unknown.  
The red day had fallen beneath the black woods,  
And the Powers of the night through the vast solitudes  
Walk'd abroad and conversed with each other.  
The trees  
Were in sound and in motion, and mutter'd like seas  
In Elfland. The road through the forest was hollow'd.  
On he sped through the darkness, as though he were follow'd  
Fast, fast by the Erl King!  
The wild wizard-work  
Of the forest at last open'd sharp, o'er the fork  
Of a savage ravine, and behind the black stems  
Of the last trees, whose leaves in the light gleam'd like gems.  
Broke the broad moon above the voluminous  
Rock-chaos,—the Hecate of that Tartarus!

With his horse reeking white, he at last reach'd  
the door

Of a small mountain inn, on the brow of a hoar  
Craggy promontory, o'er a fissure as grim,  
Through which, ever roaring, there leap'd o'er  
the limb

Of the rent rock a torrent of water, from sight,  
Into pools that were feeding the roots of the  
night.

A balcony hung o'er the water. Above  
In a glimmering casement a shade seem'd to  
move.

At the door the old negress was nodding her  
head

As he reach'd it. "My mistress awaits you,"  
she said.

And up the rude stairway of creaking pine  
rafter

He follow'd her silent. A few moments after,  
His heart almost stunned him, his head seem'd  
to reel,

For a door closed—Luvois was alone with  
Lucile.

## IV.

In a gray traveling dress, her dark hair con-  
fined

Streaming o'er it, and tossed now and then by  
the wind

From the lattice, that waded the dull flame in  
a spire

From a brass lamp before her—a faint hectic  
fire

On her cheek, to her eyes lent the lustre of  
 fever;  
 They seem'd to have wept themselves wider  
 than ever,  
 Those dark eyes—so dark and so deep!  
 “You relent?  
 And your plans have been changed by the let-  
 ter I sent?”  
 There his voice sank, borne down by a strong  
 inward strife.

LUCILE.

Your letter! yes, Duke. For it threatens  
 man's life—  
 Woman's honor.

LUVOIS.

The last, madam, not?

LUCILE.

Both. I glance  
 At your own words; blush, son of the knight-  
 hood of France,  
 As I read them! You say in this letter . . .  
 “I know  
 Why now you refuse me; 'tis (is it not so?)  
 For the man who has trifled before, wantonly,  
 And now trifles again with the heart you deny  
 To myself. But he shall not! By man's last  
 wild law,  
 I will seize on the right (the right, Duc de  
 Luvois!)  
 To avenge for you, woman, the past and to  
 give

To the future its freedom. That man shall not  
live  
To make you as wretched as you have made  
me!"

LUVOIS.

Well, madam, in those words what word do  
you see  
That threatens the honor of woman?

LUCILE.

See! . . . what,  
What word, do you ask? Every word! would  
you not,  
Had I taken your hand thus, have felt that  
your name  
Was soil'd and dishonor'd by more than mere  
shame  
If the woman that bore it had first been the  
cause  
Of the crime which in these words is menaced?  
You pause!  
Woman's honor, you ask? Is there, sir, no  
dishonor  
In the smile of a woman, when men, gazing on  
her,  
Can shudder, and say, "In that smile is a  
grave?"  
No! you can have no cause, Duke, for no right  
you have  
In the contest you menace. That contest but  
draws  
Every right into ruin. By all human laws  
Of man's heart I forbid it, by all sanctities  
Of man's social honor!



The Duke dropp'd his eyes.  
 "I obey you," he said, "but let woman beware  
 How she plays fast and loose thus with human  
 despair,  
 And the storm in man's heart. Madam, yours  
 was the right  
 When you saw that I hoped, to extinguish hope  
 quite,  
 But you should from the first have done this,  
 for I feel  
 That you knew from the first that I loved you."

Lucile

This sudden reproach seem'd to startle.  
 She raised  
 A slow, wistful regard to his features, and  
 gazed  
 On them silent awhile. His own looks were  
 downcast.  
 Through her heart, whence its first wild alarm  
 was now pass'd,  
 Pity crept, and perhaps o'er her conscience a  
 tear,  
 Falling softly, awoke it.

However severe,  
 Were they unjust, those sudden upbraidings,  
 to her?  
 Had she lightly misconstrued this man's char-  
 acter,  
 Which had seem'd, even when most impas-  
 sioned it seem'd,  
 Too self-conscious to lose all in love? Had she  
 deem'd  
 That this airy, gay, insolent man of the world,

So proud of the place the world gave him, held  
furl'd

In his bosom no passion which once shaken  
wide

Might tug, till it snapped, that erect lofty  
pride;

Were those elements in him, which once roused  
to strife

Overthrow a whole nature, and change a whole  
life?

There are two kinds of strength. One, the  
strength of the river

Which, through continents pushes its pathway  
forever

To fling its fond heart in the sea; if it lose

This, the aim of its life, it is lost to its use,

It goes mad, is diffused into deluge, and dies.

The other, the strength of the sea; which sup-  
plies

Its deep life from mysterious sources, and  
draws

The river's life into its own life, by laws

Which it heeds not. The difference in each  
case is this:

The river is lost, if the ocean it miss;

If the sea miss the river, what matter? The  
sea

Is the sea still, forever. Its deep heart will  
be

Self-sufficing, unconscious of loss as of yore;

Its sources are infinite; still to the shore,

With no diminution of pride, it will say,

"I am here; I, the sea! stand aside, and make  
way!"

Was his love, then, the love of the river? and  
she,  
Has she taken that love for the love of the sea?  
At that thought, from her aspect whatever had  
been  
Stern or haughty departed; and, humbled in  
mien,  
She approach'd him and brokenly murmur'd,  
as though  
To herself more than him, "Was I wrong? Is  
it so?  
Hear me, Duke! you must feel that, whatever  
you deem  
Your right to reproach me in this, you esteem  
I may claim on one ground—I at least am sin-  
cere.  
You say that to me from the first it was clear  
That you loved me. But what if this knowl-  
edge were known  
At a moment in life when I felt most alone,  
At least able to be so! a moment, in fact,  
When I strove from one haunting regret, to  
retract  
And emancipate life and once more to fulfil  
Woman's destinies, duties, and hopes? would  
you still  
So bitterly blame me, Eugene de Luvois,  
If I hoped to see all this, or deem'd that I saw  
For a moment the promise of this in the  
plighted  
Affection of one who, in nature, united  
So much that from others affection might  
claim  
If only affection were free? Do you blame

The hope of that moment? I deem'd my heart  
 free  
 From all, saving sorrow. I deem'd that in me  
 There was yet strength to mould it once more  
 to my will,  
 To uplift it once more to my hope. Do you  
 still  
 Blame me, Duke, that I did not then bid you  
 refrain  
 From hope? alas! I too then hoped!"

LUVVOIS.

Oh, again,  
 Yet again, say that thrice blessed word! say,  
 Lucile,  
 That you then deign'd to hope—

LUCILE.

Yes! to hope I could feel,  
 And could give to you, that without which, all  
 else given  
 Were but to deceive, and to injure you even:  
 A heart free from thoughts of another. Say,  
 then,  
 Do you blame that one hope?

LUVVOIS.

O Lucile!

"Say again,"  
 She resumed, gazing down, and with faltering  
 tone,  
 "Do you blame me that, when I at last had to  
 own  
 To my heart that the hope it had cherish'd was  
 o'er

And forever, I said to you then, 'Hope no more?'

I myself hoped no more!"

With but ill-suppressed wrath  
The Duke answered . . . "What, then! he  
recrossed your path,

This man, and you have but to see him, despite  
Of his troth to another, to take back that  
light

Worthless heart to your own, which he  
wrong'd years ago!"

Lucile faintly, brokenly murmur'd . . .

"No! no! 'Tis not that—but alas—but I cannot  
conceal

That I have not forgotten the past—but I feel  
That I cannot accept all these gifts on your  
part,—

In return for what . . . ah, Duke, what is it?  
. . . a heart

Which is only a ruin!"

With words warm and wild,  
"Though a ruin it be, trust me yet to rebuild  
And restore it," Luvois cried; "though ruin'd  
it be.

Since so dear is that ruin, ah, yield it to me!"  
He approach'd her. She shrank back. The  
grief in her eyes

Answer'd, "No!"

An emotion more fierce seem'd to rise  
And to break into flame, as though fired by  
the light

Of that look, in his heart. He exclaimed,  
"Am I right?

You reject me! Accept him?"

“I have not done so,”  
 She said firmly. He hoarsely resumed, “Not  
 yet—no!

But can you with accents as firm promise me  
 That you will not accept him?”

“Accept? Is he free?  
 Free to offer?” she said.

“You evade me, Lucile,”  
 He replied. “Ah, you will not avow what you  
 feel!

He might make himself free? Oh, you blush  
 —turn away!

Dare you openly look in my face, lady, say!  
 While you deign to reply to one question from  
 me?

I may hope not, you tell me: but tell me, may  
 he?

What! silent? I alter my question. If quite  
 Freed in faith from this troth might he hope  
 then?”

“He might,”

She said softly.

## VI.

Those two whisper'd words in his breast,  
 As he heard them, in one maddening' moment  
 releast

All that's evil and fierce in man's nature, to  
 crush

And extinguish in man all that's good. In the  
 rush

Of wild jealousy, all the fierce passions that  
 waste

And darken and devastate intellect, chased

From its realm human reason. The wild animal

In the bosom of man set free. And of all Human passions the fiercest, fierce jealousy, fierce

As the fire, and more wild than the whirlwind, to pierce

And to rend, rush'd upon him; fierce jealousy, swell'd

By all passions bred from it, and ever impell'd To involve all things else in the anguish within it

And on others inflict its own pangs!

At that minute  
What pass'd through his mind, who shall say?  
Who may tell

The dark thoughts of man's heart, which the red glare of hell

Can illumine alone?

He stared wildly around  
That lone place, so lonely! That silence! no sound

Reach'd that room, through the dark evening air, save drear

Drip and roar of the cataract ceaseless and near!

It was midnight all round on the weird silent weather;

Deep midnight in him! They two,—lone and together,

Himself, and that woman defenseless before him!

The triumph and bliss of his rival flash'd o'er him.

The abyss of his own black despair seem'd to  
 ope  
 At his feet, with that awful exclusion of hope  
 Which Dante read over the city of doom.  
 All the Tarquin pass'd into his soul in the  
 gloom,  
 And uttering words he dared never recall,  
 Words of insult and menace, he thunder'd  
 down all  
 The brew'd storm-cloud within him; its flashes  
 scorch'd blind  
 His own senses. His spirit was driven on the  
 wind  
 Of a reckless emotion beyond his control;  
 A torrent seem'd loosen'd within him. His  
 soul  
 Surged up from that caldron of passion that  
 hiss'd  
 And seeth'd in his heart.

## VII.

He had thrown, and had miss'd  
 His last stake.

## VIII.

For, transfigured, she rose from the place  
 Where he rested o'erawed: a saint's scorn on  
 her face;  
 Such a dread *vade retro* was written in light  
 On her forehead, the fiend would himself, at  
 that sight,  
 Have sunk back abash'd to perdition. I know  
 If Lucretia at Tarquin but once had look'd so,  
 She had needed no dagger next morning.



She rose

And swept to the door, like the phantom the  
 snows  
 Feel at nightfall sweep o'er them, when day-  
 light is gone,  
 And Caucasus is with the moon all alone.  
 There she paused; and, as though from im-  
 measurable,  
 Insurpassable distance, she murmur'd—  
“Farewell!  
 We, alas! have mistaken each other. Once  
 more  
 Illusion, to-night, in my lifetime is o'er.  
 Duc de Luvois, adieu!”

From the heart-breaking gloom  
 Of that vacant, reproachful, and desolate room  
 He felt she was gone—gone forever!

## IX.

No word,

The sharpest that ever was edged like a sword,  
 Could have pierced to his heart with such keen  
 accusation  
 As the silence, the sudden profound isolation,  
 In which he remain'd.

“O return; I repent!”

He exclaim'd; but no sound through the still-  
 ness was sent,  
 Save the roar of the water, in answer to him,  
 And the beetle that, sleeping, yet humm'd her  
 night-hymn:  
 An indistinct anthem, that troubled the air  
 With a searching, and wistful, and questioning  
 prayer.

"Return," sung the wandering insect. The  
     roar  
 Of the waters replied, "Nevermore! never-  
     more!"  
 He walk'd to the window. The spray on his  
     brow  
 Was flung cold from the whirlpools of water  
     below,  
 The frail wooden balcony shook in the sound  
 Of the torrent. The mountains gloom'd sul-  
     lenly round.  
 A candle one ray from a closed casement flung.  
 O'er the dim balustrade all bewilder'd he  
     hung,  
 Vaguely watching the broken and shimmering  
     blink  
 Of the stars on the veering and vitreous brink  
 Of that snake-like prone column of water; and  
     listing  
 Aloof o'er the languors of air the persisting  
 Sharp horn of the gray gnat. Before he relin-  
     quish'd  
 His unconscious employment, that light was  
     extinguish'd.  
 Wheels, at last, from the inn door aroused him.  
     He ran  
 Down the stairs; reach'd the door—just to see  
     her depart.  
 Down the mountain the carriage was speeding.

x.

His heart  
 Pealed the knell of its last hope. He rush'd  
     on; but whither

He knew not—on, into the dark cloudy  
 weather—  
 The midnight—the mountains—on, over the  
 shelf  
 Of the precipice—on, still—away from himself!  
 Till exhausted, he sank 'mid the dead leaves  
 and moss  
 At the mouth of the forest. A glimmering  
 cross  
 Of gray stone stood for prayer by the woodside.  
 He sank  
 Prayerless, powerless, down at its base, 'mid  
 the dank  
 Weeds and grasses; his face hid amongst them.  
 He knew  
 That the night had divided his whole life in  
 two.  
 Behind him a Past that was over forever;  
 Before him a Future devoid of endeavor  
 And purpose. He felt a remorse for the one,  
 Of the other a fear. What remain'd to be done?  
 Whither now should he turn? Turn again, as  
 before,  
 To his old easy, careless existence of yore  
 He could not. He felt that for better or worse  
 A change had pass'd o'er him; an angry re-  
 morse  
 Of his own frantic failure and error had marr'd  
 Such a refuge forever. The future seem'd  
 barr'd  
 By the corpse of a dead hope o'er which he  
 must tread  
 To attain it. Life's wilderness round him was  
 spread.

What clew there to cling by?  
He clung by a name  
To a dynasty fallen forever. He came  
Of an old princely house, true through change  
to the race  
And the sword of Saint Louis—a faith 'twere  
disgrace  
To relinquish, and folly to live for! Nor less  
Was his ancient religion (once potent to bless  
Or to ban; and the crozier his ancestors kneel'd  
To adore, when they fought for the Cross, in  
hard field  
With the crescent) become, ere it reached him,  
tradition;  
A mere faded badge of a social position;  
A thing to retain and say nothing about,  
Lest, if used, it should draw degradation from  
doubt.  
Thus, the first time he sought them, the creeds  
of his youth  
Wholly fail'd the strong needs of his manhood,  
in truth!  
And beyond them, what region of refuge? what  
field  
For employment, this civilized age, did it yield  
In that civilized land? or to thought? or to  
action?  
Blind deliriums, bewilder'd and endless dis-  
traction!  
Not even a desert, not even the cell  
Of a hermit to flee to, wherein he might quell  
The wild devil-instincts which now, unrepres-  
t, Ran riot through that ruin'd world in his  
breast.

## XI.

So he lay there, like Lucifer, fresh from the  
sight

Of a heaven scaled and lost; in the wide arms  
of night

O'er the howling abysses of nothingness!  
There

As he lay, Nature's deep voice was teaching  
him prayer;

But what had he to pray to?

The winds in the woods,  
The voices abroad o'er those vast solitudes,  
Were in commune all around with the invisible  
Power

That walk'd the dim world by Himself at that  
hour.

But their language he had not yet learn'd—in  
despite

Of the much he had learn'd—or forgotten it  
quite,

With its once native accents. Alas! what had  
he

To add to that deep-toned sublime symphony  
Of thanksgiving? . . . A fiery finger was still  
Scorching into his heart some dread sentence.

His will,

Like a wind that is put to no purpose, was wild  
At its work of destruction within him. The  
child

Of an infidel age, he had been his own god,  
His own devil.

He sat on the damp mountain sod,  
And stared sullenly up at the dark sky.

The clouds  
 Had heap'd themselves over the bare west in  
 crowds  
 Of misshapen, incongruous potents. A green  
 Streak of dreary, cold, luminous ether, between  
 The base of their black barricades, and the  
 ridge  
 Of the grim world, gleam'd ghastly, as under  
 some bridge,  
 Cyclop-sized, in a city of ruins o'erthrown  
 By sieges forgotten, some river, unknown  
 And unnamed, widens on into desolate lands.  
 While he gazed, that cloud-city invisible hands  
 Dismantled and rent; and reveal'd, through a  
 loop  
 In the breach'd dark, the blemish'd and half-  
 broken hoop  
 Of the moon, which soon silently sank; and  
 anon  
 The whole supernatural pageant was gone.  
 The wide night, discomfited, conscious of loss,  
 Darken'd round him. One object alone—that  
 gray cross—  
 Glimmer'd faint on the dark. Gazing up, he  
 descried  
 Through the void air, its desolate arms out-  
 stretch'd wide,  
 As though to embrace him.

He turn'd from the sight,  
 Set his face to the darkness, and fled.

## XII.

When the light  
 Of the dawn grayly flicker'd and glared on the  
 spent  
 Wearied ends of the night, like a hope that is  
 sent  
 To the need of some grief when its need is the  
 sorest,  
 He was sullenly riding across the dark forest  
 Toward Serchon.

Thus riding, with eyes of defiance  
 Set against the young day, as disclaiming alli-  
 ance  
 With aught that the day brings to man, he per-  
 ceived  
 Faintly, suddenly, fleetingly, through the  
 damp-leaved  
 Autumn branches that put forth gaunt arms on  
 his way  
 The face of a man pale and wistful, and gray  
 With the gray glare of morning. Eugene de  
 Luvois,  
 With the sense of a strange second sight, when  
 he saw  
 That phantom-like face, could at once recog-  
 nize,  
 By the sole instinct now left to guide him, the  
 eyes  
 Of his rival, though fleeting the vision and dim,  
 With a stern sad inquiry fix'd keenly on him,  
 And, to meet it, a lie leap'd at once to his  
 own:  
 A lie born of that lying darkness now grown  
 Over all in his nature! He answer'd that gaze

With a look which, if ever a man's look con-  
veys  
More intensely than words what a man means,  
convey'd  
Beyond doubt in its smile an announcement  
which said,  
"I have triumph'd. The question your eyes  
would imply  
Comes too late, Alfred Vargrave!"  
And so he rode by,  
And rode on, and rode gayly, and rode out of  
sight  
Leaving that look behind him to rankle and  
bite.

## XIII.

And it bit, and it rankled.

## XIV.

Lord Alfred, scarce knowing,  
Or choosing, or heeding the way he was going,  
By one wild hope, impell'd, by one wild fear  
pursued,  
And led by one instinct, which seem'd to ex-  
clude  
From his mind every human sensation, save  
one—  
The torture of doubt—had stray'd moodily on,  
Down the highway deserted, that evening in  
which  
With the Duke he had parted; stray'd on,  
through rich  
Haze of sunset, or into the gradual night,



Which darken'd, unnoticed, the land from his  
sight,  
Toward Saint Saviour; nor did the changed  
aspect of all  
The wild scenery round him avail to recall  
To his senses their normal perceptions, until,  
As he stood on the black shaggy brow of the  
hill  
At the mouth of the forest, the moon, which  
had hung  
Two dark hours in a cloud, slipp'd on fire from  
among  
The rent vapors and sunk o'er the ridge of the  
world.  
Then he lifted his eyes, and saw round him un-  
furl'd,  
In one moment of splendor, the leagues of dark  
trees,  
And the long rocky line of the wild Pyrenees.  
And he knew by the milestone scored rough  
on the face  
Of the bare rock, he was but two hours from  
the place  
Where Lucile and Luvois must have met. This  
same track  
The Duke must have traversed, perforce, to  
get back  
To Serchon; not yet then the Duke had re-  
turn'd!  
He listen'd, he look'd up the dark, but dis-  
cern'd  
Not a trace, not a sound of a horse by the way.  
He knew that the night was approaching to  
day.

He resolved to proceed to Saint Saviour. The  
 morn  
 Which, at last, through the forest broke chill  
 and forlorn,  
 Reveal'd to him, riding toward Serchon, the  
 Duke.  
 'Twas then that the two men exchanged look  
 for look.

## xv.

And the Duke's rankled in him.

## xvi.

He rush'd on. He tore  
 His path through the thicket. He reach'd the  
 inn door,  
 Roused the yet drowsing porter, reluctant to  
 rise,  
 And inquired for the Countess. The man  
 rubb'd his eyes.  
 The Countess was gone. And the Duke?  
 The man stared  
 A sleepy inquiry.

With accents that scared  
 The man's dull sense awake, "He, the strang-  
 er," he cried,  
 "Who had been there that night!"  
 The man grinn'd and replied,  
 With a variant intelligence, "He, oh ay, ay!  
 He went after the lady,"

No further reply  
 Could he give. Alfred Vargrave demanded no  
 more

Flung a coin to the man, and so turn'd from the door.

“What! the Duke then the night in that lone inn had pass'd?

In that lone inn—with her!” Was that look he had cast

When they met in the forest, that look which remain'd

On his mind with its terrible smile, thus explain'd?

## XVII.

The day was half-turn'd to the evening, before He re-entered Serchon, with a heart sick and sore.

In the midst of a light crowd of babblers, his look,

By their voices attracted, distinguished the Duke,

Gay, insolent, noisy, with eyes sparkling bright, With laughter, shrill, airy, continuous.

Right

Through the throng Alfred Vargrave, with swift sombre stride,

Glided on. The Duke noticed him, turn'd, stepp'd aside,

And, cordially grasping his hand, whisper'd low,

“O, how right have you been! There can never be—no,

Never—any more contest between us! Milord, Let us henceforth be friends!”

Having utter'd that word,

He turn'd lightly round on his heel, and again

His gay laughter was heard, echoed loud by  
that train

Of his young imitators.

Lord Alfred stood still.

Rooted, stunn'd to the spot. He felt weary  
and ill,

Out of heart with his own heart, and sick to  
the soul

With a dull, stifling anguish he could not con-  
trol.

Does he hear in a dream, through the buzz of  
the crowd,

The Duke's blithe associates, babbling aloud  
Some comment upon his gay humor that day?

He never was gayer: what makes him so gay?  
'Tis doubt, say the flatterers, flattering in

tune,

Some vestal whose virtue no tongue dare im-  
pugn

Has at last found a Mars—who, of course, shall  
be nameless,

The vestal that yields to Mars only, is blame-  
less!

Hark! hears he a name which, thus syllabled,  
stirs

All his heart into tumult? . . . Lucile de  
Nevers

With the Duke's coupled gayly, in some laugh-  
ing, light,

Free allusion? Not so as might give him the  
right

To turn fiercely round on his speaker, but yet  
To a trite and irreverent compliment set!

## XVIII.

Slowly, slowly, usurping that place in his soul  
 Where the thought of Lucile was enshrined,  
 did there roll  
 Back again, back again, on its smooth down-  
 ward course  
 O'er his nature, with gather'd momentum and  
 force.  
 The world.

## XIX.

“No!” he mutter'd, “she cannot have sinn'd!  
 True! women there are (self-named women of  
 mind!)  
 Who love rather liberty—liberty, yes!  
 To choose and to leave—than the legalized  
 stress  
 Of the lovinest marriage. But she—is she  
 so?  
 I will not believe it. Lucile? O, no, no!  
 Not Lucile!  
 “But the world? and, ah, what would it say?  
 O, the look of that man, and his laughter, to-  
 day!  
 The gossip's light question! the slanderous jest!  
 She is right! no, we could not be happy. 'Tis  
 best  
 As it is. I will write to her—write, O, my  
 heart!  
 And accept her farewell. Our farewell! must  
 we part—  
 Part thus, then—forever, Lucile? Is it so?  
 Yes! I feel it. We could not be happy, I know.  
 'Twas a dream! we must waken!”

## XX.

With head bow'd, as though  
 By the weight of the heart's resignation, and  
 slow  
 Moody footsteps, he turned to his inn.

Drawn apart  
 From the gate, in the court-yard and ready to  
 start,

Postboys mounted, portmanteaus packed up  
 and made fast,

A traveling-carriage, unnoticed, he pass'd.

He order'd his horse to be ready anon;

Sent on, and paid, for the reckoning, and  
 slowly pass'd

And ascended the staircase, and enter'd his  
 room.

It was twilight. The chamber was dark in the  
 gloom

Of the evening. He listlessly kindled a light  
 On the mantel-piece; there a large card caught  
 his sight—

A large card, a stout card, well-printed and  
 plain,

Nothing flourishing, flimsy, affected, or vain,  
 It gave a respectable look to the slab

That it lay on. The name was—

## SIR RIDLEY MACNAB.

Full familiar to him was the name that he saw,  
 For 'twas that of his own future uncle-in-law.

Mrs. Darcy's rich brother, the banker, well-  
 known

As wearing the longest philacteried gown

Of all the rich Pharisees England can boast of;  
A shrewd Puritan Scot, whose sharp wits made  
the most of  
This world and the next; having largely in-  
vested  
Not only where treasure is never molested  
By thieves, moth, or rust; but on this earthly  
ball  
Where interest was high, and security small,  
Of mankind there was never a theory yet  
Not by some individual instance upset:  
And so that sorrowful verse of the Psalm  
Which declares that the wicked expand like the  
palm  
In a world where the righteous are stunted and  
pent,  
A cheering exception did Ridley present.  
Like the worthy of Uz, Heaven prosper'd his  
piety.  
The leader of every religious society,  
Christian knowledge he labor'd through life to  
promote  
With personal profit, and knew how to quote  
Both the Stocks and the Scripture, with equal  
advantage  
To himself and admiring friends, in this Cant-  
Age.

## XXI.

Whilst over this card Alfred vacantly brooded,  
A waiter his head through the doorway pro-  
truded;  
"Sir Ridley MacNab with Milord wish'd to  
speak."

Alfred Vargrave could feel there were tears on  
his cheek.

He brushed them away with a gesture of pride.  
He glanced at the glass; when his own face  
he eyed,

He was scared by his pallor. Inclining his  
head,

He with tones calm, unshaken, and silvery,  
said,

“Sir Ridley may enter.”

In three minutes more

That benign apparition appeared at the door.  
Sir Ridley, released for a while from the cares  
Of business, and minded to breathe the pure  
airs

Of the blue Pyrenees, and enjoy his release,  
In company there with his sister and niece,  
Found himself now at Serchon—distributing  
tracts,

Sowing seed by the way, and collecting new  
facts

For Exeter Hall; he was starting that night  
For Bigorre; he had heard, to his cordial de-  
light,

That Lord Alfred was there, and, himself,  
setting out

For the same destination; impatient, no doubt!  
Here some commonplace compliments as to  
“the marriage”

Through his speech trickled softly, like honey:  
his carriage

Was ready. A storm seem'd to threaten the  
weather;



If his young friend agreed, why not travel together?

With a footstep uncertain and restless, a frown  
Of perplexity, during this speech, up and  
down

Alfred Vargrave was striding; but, after a  
pause

And a slight hesitation, the which seem'd to  
cause

Some surprise to Sir Ridley, he answer'd—  
“My dear

Sir Ridley, allow me a few moments here—  
Half an hour at the most—to conclude an affair  
Of a nature so urgent as hardly to spare  
My presence (which brought me, indeed, to  
this spot),

Before I accept your kind offer.”

“Why not?”

Said Sir Ridley, and smiled. Alfred Var-  
grave, before

Sir Ridley observed it, had pass'd through the  
door.

A few moments later, with footsteps revealing  
Intense agitation of uncontroll'd feeling,  
He was rapidly pacing the garden below.

What pass'd through his mind then is more  
than I know.

But before one half-hour into darkness had fled,  
In the court-yard he stood with Sir Ridley.

His tread

Was firm and composed. Not a sign on his  
face

Betray'd there the least agitation. “The  
place

You so kindly have offer'd," he said, "I  
accept."

And he stretched out his hand. The two trav-  
elers stepp'd

Smiling into the carriage.

And thus, out of sight,  
They drove down the dark road, and into the  
night.

XXII.

Sir Ridley was one of those wise men who, so  
far

As their power of saying it goes, say with Zo-  
phar,

"We, no doubt, are the people, and wisdom  
shall die with us!"

Though of wisdom like theirs there is no small  
supply with us.

Side by side in the carriage ensconced, the two  
men

Began to converse somewhat drowsily, when  
Alfred suddenly thought—"Here's a man of  
ripe age,

At my side, by his fellows reputed as sage,  
Who looks happy, and therefore who must have  
been wise;

Suppose I with caution reveal to his eyes  
Some few of the reasons which make me be-  
lieve

That I neither am happy nor wise? 'twould  
relieve

And enlighten, perchance, my own darkness  
and doubt."

For which purpose a feeler he softly put out.  
It was snapp'd up at once.

“What is truth?” jesting Pilate  
Ask'd, and pass'd from the question at once  
with a smile at

Its utter futility. Had he address'd it  
To Ridley MacNab, he at least had confess'd it  
Admitted discussion! and certainly no man  
Could more promptly have answer'd the skept-  
tical Roman

Than Ridley! Hear some street astronomer  
talk!

Grant him two or three hearers, a morsel of  
chalk,

And forthwith on the pavement he'll sketch  
you the scheme

Of the heavens. Then hear him enlarge on  
his theme.

Not afraid of La Place, nor of Arago, he!  
He'll prove you the whole plan in plain A B C.  
Here's you sun—call him A; B's the moon; it  
is clear

How the rest of the alphabet brings up the rear  
Of the planets. Now ask Arago, ask La Place  
(Your sages who speak with the heavens face  
to face!),

Their science in plain A B C to accord.  
To your point-blank inquiry, my friends! not  
a word

Will you get for your pains from their sad lips.  
Alas!

Not a drop from the bottle that's quite full  
will pass.

'Tis the half-empty vessel that freest emits

The water that's in it. 'Tis thus with men's  
 wits;  
 Or at least with their knowledge. A man's  
 capability  
 Of imparting to others a truth with facility  
 Is proportion'd forever with painful exactness  
 To the portable nature, the vulgar compactness,  
 The minuteness in size, or the lightness in  
 weight,  
 Of the truth he imparts. So small coins circu-  
 late  
 More freely than large ones. A beggar asks  
 alms,  
 And we fling him a sixpence, nor feel any  
 qualms;  
 But if every street charity shook an investment,  
 Or each beggar to clothe we must strip of a  
 vestment,  
 The length of the process would limit the act;  
 And therefore the truth that's summed up in  
 a tract  
 Is most likely dispensed.

As for Alfred, indeed,  
 On what spoonfuls of truth he was suffer'd to  
 feed  
 By Sir Ridley, I know not. This only I know,  
 That the two men thus talking continued to  
 go  
 Onward somehow, together—on into the night  
 The midnight—in which they escape from our  
 sight.

## XXIII.

And meanwhile a world had been changed in  
its place,  
And those glittering chains, that o'er blue  
balmy space  
Hang the blessing of darkness, had drawn out  
of sight  
To solace unseen hemispheres, the soft night,  
And the dew of the dayspring benignly de-  
scended,  
And the fair morn to all things new sanction  
extended,  
In the smile of the East. And the lark soar-  
ing on,  
Lost in light, shook the dawn with a song from  
the sun.  
And the world laugh'd.  
It wanted but two rosy hours  
From the noon, when they pass'd through the  
thick passion flowers  
Of the little wild garden that dimpled before  
The small house where their carriage now  
stopp'd, at Bigorre.  
And more fair than the flowers, more fresh  
than the dew,  
With her white morning robe flitting joyously  
through  
The dark shrubs with which the soft hillside  
was clothed,  
Alfred Vargrave perceived, where he paused,  
his betrothed.  
Matilda sprang to him, at once, with a face  
Of such sunny sweetness, such gladness, such  
grace,



## XXV.

Yet, ere bidding farewell to Lucile de Nevers,  
Hear her own heart's farewell in this letter of  
hers.

## THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO A FRIEND IN INDIA.

“Once more, O my friend, to your arms and  
your heart,  
And the places of old . . . never, never to part!  
Once more to the palm, and the fountain!  
Once more  
To the land of my birth, and the deep skies of  
yore!  
From the cities of Europe, pursued by the fret  
Of their turmoil wherever my footsteps are set;  
From the children that cry for the birth, and  
behold,  
There is no strength to bear them—old Time  
is so old!  
From the world's weary masters, that come  
upon earth  
Sapp'd and mined by the fever they bear from  
their birth;  
From the men of small stature, mere parts of  
a crowd,  
Born too late, when the strength of the world  
hath been bow'd;  
Back,—back to the orient, from whose sun-  
bright womb  
Sprang the giants which now are no more, in  
the bloom  
And the beauty of times that are faded forever!

To the palms! to the tombs! to the still Sacred  
River!

Where I too, the child of a day that is done,  
First leaped into life, and look'd up at the sun,  
Back again, back again, to the hill-tops of  
home

I come O my friend, my consoler, I come!  
Are the three intense stars, that we watch'd  
night by night

Burning broad on the band of Orion, as bright?  
Are the large Indian moons as serene as of old,  
When, as children, we gather'd the moonbeams  
for gold?

Do you yet recollect me, my friend? Do you  
still

Remember the free games we play'd on the  
hill,

'Mid those huge stones upheav'd, where we  
recklessly trod

O'er the old ruin'd fane of the old ruin'd god?  
How he frown'd while around him we care-  
lessly play'd!

That frown on my life ever after hath stay'd,  
Like the shade of a solemn experience upcast  
From some vague supernatural grief in the  
past.

For the poor god, in pain, more than anger,  
he frown'd,

To perceive that our youth, though so fleeting,  
had found,

In its transient and ignorant gladness, the bliss  
Which his science divine seem'd divinely to  
miss.

Alas! you may haply remember me yet



The free child, whose glad childhood myself  
I forget.

I come—a sad woman, defrauded of rest:

I bear to you only a laboring breast:

My heart is a storm-beaten ark, wildly hurl'd  
O'er the whirlpools of time, with the wrecks  
of a world:

The dove from my bosom hath flown far away:  
It is flown and returns not, though many a day  
Have I watch'd from the windows of life for  
its coming.

Friend, I sigh for repose, I am weary of roam-  
ing.

I know not what Ararat rises for me

Far away, o'er the waves of the wandering  
sea;

I know not what rainbow may yet, from far  
hills,

Lift the primrose of hope, the cessation of ills:  
But a voice, like the voice of my youth, in my  
breast

Wakes and whispers me on—to the East! to  
the East!

Shall I find the child's heart that I left there?  
or find

The lost youth I recall with its pure peace of  
mind?

Alas! who shall number the drops of the rain?  
Or give to the dead leaves their greenness  
again?

Who shall seal up the caverns the earthquake  
hath rent?

Who shall bring forth the winds that within  
them are pent?

To a voice who shall render an image? or who  
From the heats of the noontide shall gather  
the dew?

I have burn'd out within me the fuel of life,  
Wherefore lingers the flame? Rest is sweet  
after strife.

I would sleep for a while. I am weary.

“My friend,  
I had meant in these lines to regather, and  
send

To our old home, my life's scatter'd links.  
But 'tis vain!

Each attempt seems to shatter the chaplet  
again;

Only fit now for fingers like mine to run o'er,  
Who return, a recluse, to those cloisters of  
yore

Whence too far I have wander'd.

“How many long years  
Does it seem to me now since the quick, scorch-  
ing tears,

While I wrote to you, splash'd out a girl's  
premature

Moans of pain at what women in silence en-  
dure!

To your eyes, friend of mine, and to your eyes  
alone,

That now long-faded page of my life hath  
been shown

Which recorded my heart's birth, and death,  
as you know,

Many years since,—how many?

“A few months ago  
I seem'd reading it backward, that page! Why  
explain

Whence or how? The old dream of my life  
rose again.

The old superstition! the idol of old!

It is over. The leaf trodden down in the mold  
Is not to the forest more lost than to me

That emotion. I bury it here by the sea

Which will bear me anon far away from the  
shore

Of a land which my footsteps will visit no  
more.

And a heart's *requiescat* I write on that grave.

Hark! the sigh of the wind, and the sound of  
the wave,

Seem like voices of spirits that whisper me  
home!

I come, O you whispering voices, I come!

My friend, ask me nothing.

“Receive me alone  
As a Santon receives to his dwelling of stone  
In silence some pilgrim the midnight may  
bring:

It may be an angel that, weary of wing,

Hath paused in his flight from some city of  
doom,

Or only a wayfarer stray'd in the gloom.

This only I know: that in Europe at least

Lives the craft or the power that must master  
our East.

Wherefore strive where the gods must them-  
selves yield at last?

Both they and their altars pass by with the  
Past.

The gods of the household Time thrusts from  
the shelf;

And I seem as unreal and weird to myself  
As these idols of old.

“Other times, other men,  
Other men, other passions!

“So be it! yet again  
I turned to my birthplace, the birthplace of  
morn,

And the light of those lands where the great  
sun is born!

Spread your arms, O my friend! on your  
breast let me feel

The repose which hath fled from my own.

“Your LUCILE.”

## PART II.

## CANTO I.

## I.

Hail, Muse! But each Muse by this time has, I  
know,  
Been used up, and Apollo has bent his own  
bow  
All too long; so I leave unassaulted the portal  
Of Olympus, and only invoke here a mortal.

Hail, Murray!—not Lindley,—but Murray and  
Son.

Hail, omniscient, beneficent, great Two-in-  
One!

In Albemarle Street may thy temple long  
stand!

Long enlighten'd and led by thine erudite  
hand,

May each novice in science nomadic unravel  
Statistical mazes of modernized travel!

May each innkeeper knave long thy judgment  
revere,

And the postboys of Europe regard thee with  
fear;

While they feel, in the silence of baffled extor-  
 tion,  
 That knowledge is power! Long, long, like  
 that portion  
 Of the national soil which the Greek exile took  
 In his baggage wherever he went, may thy book  
 Cheer each poor British pilgrim, who trusts to  
 thy wit  
 Not to pay through his nose just for following  
 it!  
 May'st thou long, O instructor! preside o'er his  
 way,  
 And teach him alike what to praise and to pay!  
 Thee, pursuing this pathway of song, once  
 again  
 I invoke, lest, unskill'd, I should wander in  
 vain.  
 To my call be propitious, nor, churlish refuse  
 Thy great accents to lend to the lips of my  
 Muse;  
 For I sing of the Naiads who dwell 'mid the  
 stems  
 Of the green linden-trees by the waters of Ems.  
 Yes! thy spirit descends upon mine, O John  
 Murray!  
 And I start—with thy book—for the Baths in a  
 hurry.

## II.

"At Coblenz a bridge of boats crosses the  
 Rhine;  
 And from thence the road, winding by Ehren-  
 breitstein,  
 Passes over the frontier of Nassau.

("N. B.

No custom-house here since the Zollverein."  
See

Murray, paragraph 30.)

"The route, at each turn,  
Here the lover of nature allows to discern,  
In varying prospects, a rich wooded dale:  
The vine and acacia-tree mostly prevail  
In the foliage observable here; and, moreover,  
The soil is carbonic. The road, under cover  
Of the grape-clad and mountainous upland that  
hems  
Round this beautiful spot, brings the traveler  
to—

"EMS.

A Schnellpost from Frankfort arrives every  
day.

At the Kurhaus (the old Ducal mansion) you  
pay  
Eight florins for lodgings. A Restaurateur  
Is attach'd to the place; but most travelers  
prefer

(Including, indeed, many persons of note)  
To dine at the usual-priced table d'hote.  
Through the town runs the Lahn, the steep  
green banks of which  
Two rows of white picturesque houses enrich,  
And between the high road and the river is  
laid

Out a sort of a garden, call'd 'The Promenade.'  
Female visitors here, who may make up their  
mind  
To ascend to the top of these mountains, will  
find

On the banks of the stream, saddled all the day  
 long,  
 Troops of donkeys—sure-footed—proverbially  
 strong;”  
 And the traveler at Ems may remark, as he  
 passes,  
 Here, as elsewhere, the women run after the  
 asses.

## III.

’Mid the world’s weary denizens bound for  
 these springs  
 In the month when the merle on the maple-  
 bough sings,  
 Pursued to the place from dissimilar paths  
 By a similar sickness, there came to the baths  
 Four sufferers—each stricken deep through the  
 heart,  
 Or the head, by the selfsame invisible dart  
 Of the arrow that flieth unheard in the noon,  
 From the sickness that walketh unseen in the  
 moon,  
 Through this great lazaretto of life, where in  
 each  
 Infects with his own sores the next within  
 reach.  
 First of these were a young English husband  
 and wife,  
 Grown weary ere half through the journey of  
 life.  
 O Nature, say where, thou gray mother of  
 earth,  
 Is the strength of thy youth? that thy womb  
 brings to birth



Only old men to-day! On the winds, as of old,  
 Thy voice in its accent is joyous and bold;  
 Thy forests are green as of yore; and thine  
 oceans

Yet move in the might of their ancient emo-  
 tions:

But man—thy last birth and thy best—is no  
 more

Life's free lord, that look'd up to the starlight  
 of yore,

With the faith on the brow, and the fire in the  
 eyes,

The firm foot on the earth, the high heart in  
 the skies;

But a gray-headed infant, defrauded of youth,  
 Born too late or too early.

The lady, in truth,  
 Was young, fair, and gentle; and never was  
 given

To more heavenly eyes the pure azure of  
 heaven.

Never yet did the sun touch to ripples of gold  
 Tresses brighter than those which her soft  
 hand unroll'd

From her noble and innocent brow, when she  
 rose,

An Aurora, at dawn, from her balmy repose,  
 And into the mirror the bloom and the blush  
 Of her beauty broke, glowing; like light in a  
 gush

From the sunrise in summer.

Love, roaming, shall meet  
 But rarely a nature more sound or more  
 sweet

Eyes brighter—brows whiter—a figure more  
 fair  
 Or lovelier lengths of more radiant hair—  
 Than thine Lady Alfred! And here I aver  
 (May those that have seen thee declare if I err)  
 That not all the oysters in Britain contain  
 A pearl pure as thou art.

Let some one explain,—  
 Who may know more than I of the intimate life  
 Of the pearl with the oyster,—why yet in his  
 wife,  
 In despite of her beauty—and most when he  
 felt  
 His soul to the sense of her loveliness melt—  
 Lord Alfred miss'd something he sought for:  
 indeed,  
 The more that he miss'd it the greater the  
 need;  
 Till it seem'd to himself he could willingly  
 spare  
 All the charms that he found for the one charm  
 not there.

## IV.

For the blessings Life lends us, it strictly de-  
 mands  
 The worth of their full usufruct at our hands.  
 And the value of all things exists, not indeed  
 In themselves, but man's use of them, feeding  
 man's need.  
 Alfred Vargrave, in wedding with beauty and  
 youth,  
 Had embraced both Ambition and Wealth.  
 Yet in truth



“Mid the dank weeds and grasses.”—Page 161.  
Lucile.



Unfulfill'd the ambition, and sterile the wealth  
 (In a life paralyzed by a moral ill-health),  
 Had remain'd, while the beauty and youth,  
     unredeem'd  
 From a vague disappointment at all things,  
     but seem'd  
 Day by day to reproach him in silence for all  
 That lost youth in himself they had fail'd to  
     recall  
 No career had he follow'd, no object obtain'd  
 In the world by those worldly advantages  
     gain'd  
 From nuptials beyond which once seem'd to  
     appear,  
 Lit by love, the broad path of a brilliant career.  
 All that glitter'd and gleam'd through the  
     moonlight of youth  
 With a glory so fair, now that manhood in  
     truth  
 Grasp'd and gather'd it, seem'd like that false  
     fairy gold  
 Which leaves in the hand only moss, leaves and  
     mould

## v.

Fairy gold! moss and leaves! and the young  
     Fairy Bride?  
 Lived there yet fairy-lands in the face at his  
     side?  
 Say, O friend, if at evening thou ever hast  
     watch'd  
 Some pale and impalpable vapor, detach'd  
 From the dim and disconsolate earth, rise and  
     fall

O'er the light of a sweet serene star, until all  
The chill'd splendor reluctantly waned in the  
deep

Of its own native heaven? Even so seem'd to  
creep

O'er that fair and ethereal face, day by day,  
While the radiant vermeil, subsiding away,  
Hid its light in the heart, and faint gradual veil  
Of a sadness unconscious.

The lady grew pale  
As silent her lord grew: and both, as they eyed  
Each the other askance, turn'd, and secretly  
sigh'd

Ah, wise friend, what avails all experience can  
give?

True, we know what life is—but, alas! do we  
live?

The grammar of life we have gotten by heart,  
But life's self we have made a dead language  
—an art,

Not a voice. Could we speak it, but once, as  
'twas spoken

When the silence of passion the first time was  
broken!

Cuvier knew the world better than Adam, no  
doubt:

But the last man, at best, was but learned  
about

What the first, without learning, enjoy'd.  
What art thou

To the man of to-day, O Leviathan, now?

A science. What wert thou to him that from  
ocean

First beheld thee appear? A surprise,—an  
emotion!  
When life leaps in the veins, when it beats in  
the heart,  
When it thrills as it fills every animate part,  
Where lurks it? how works it? . . . we scarcely  
detect it!  
But life goes: the heart dies: haste, O leech,  
and dissect it!  
This accursed æsthetical, ethical age  
Hath so finger'd life's hornbook, so blurr'd  
every page,  
That the old glad romance, the gay chivalrous  
story  
With its fables of faery, its legends of glory,  
Is turn'd to a tedious instruction, not new  
To the children that read it insipidly through.  
We know too much of Love ere we love. We  
can trace  
Nothing new, unexpected, or strange in his  
face  
When we see it at last. 'Tis the same little  
Cupid,  
With the same dimpled cheek, and the smile  
almost stupid,  
We have seen in our pictures, and stuck on  
our shelves,  
And copied a hundred times over, ourselves,  
And wherever we turn, and whatever we do,  
Still that horrible sense of the *deja connu!*

## VI.

Perchance 'twas the fault of the life that they  
led;

Perchance 'twas the fault of the novels they  
read;

Perchance 'twas the fault in themselves; I am  
bound not

To say: this I know—that these two creatures  
found not

In each other some sign they expected to find  
Of a something unnamed in the heart or the  
mind;

And, missing it, each felt a right to complain  
Of a sadness which each found no word to  
explain.

Whatever it was, the world noticed not it  
In the light-hearted beauty, the light-hearted  
wit.

Still, as once with the actors in Greece, 'tis the  
case,

Each must speak to the crown with a mask on  
his face.

Praise follow'd Matilda wherever she went.  
She was flatter'd. Can flattery purchase con-  
tent?

Yes. While to its voice, for a moment, she  
listen'd,

The young cheek still bloom'd and the soft eyes  
still glisten'd;

And her lord, when, like one of those light  
vivid things

That glide down the gauzes of summer with  
wings

Of rapturous radiance, unconscious she moved  
Through that buzz of inferior creatures, which  
proved

Her beauty, their envy, one moment forgot,



'Mid the many charms there, the one charm  
 that was not:  
 And when o'er her beauty enraptured he bow'd  
 (As they turn'd to each other, each flush'd from  
 the crowd),  
 And murmur'd those praises which yet seem'd  
 more dear  
 Than the praises of others had grown to her  
 ear,  
 She, too, ceased awhile her own fate to regret:  
 "Yes! . . . he loves me," she sigh'd; "this is  
 love, then—and yet!"

## VII.

Ah, that yet! fatal word! 'tis the moral of all  
 Thought and felt, seen or done, in this world  
 since the Fall!  
 It stands at the end of each sentence we learn:  
 It flits in the vista of all we discern;  
 It leads us, forever and ever, away,  
 To find in to-morrow what flies with to-day.  
 'Twas this same little fatal and mystical word  
 That now, like a mirage, led my lady and lord  
 To the waters of Ems from the waters of  
 Marah!  
 Drooping pilgrims in Fashion's blank, arid  
 Sahara.

## VIII.

At the same time, pursued by a spell much the  
 same,  
 To these waters two other worn pilgrims there  
 came;

One a man, one a woman: just now, at the  
 latter,  
 As the Reader I mean by and by to look at her  
 And judge for himself, I will not even glance.

## IX.

Of the self-crown'd young kings of the Fashion  
 in France  
 Whose resplendent regalia so dazzled the sight,  
 Whose horse was so perfect, whose boots were  
 so bright,  
 Who so hailed in the salon, so mark'd in the  
 Bois,  
 Who so welcomed by all, as Eugene de Luvois?  
 Of all the smooth-brow'd premature debauchees  
 In that town of all towns, where Debauchery  
 sees  
 On the forehead of youth her mark everywhere  
 graven,—  
 In Paris I mean,—where the streets are all  
 paven  
 By those two fiends whom Milton saw bridging  
 the way  
 From Hell to this planet,—who, haughty and  
 gay,  
 The free rebel of life, bound or led by no law,  
 Walk'd that causeway as bold as Eugene de  
 Luvois?  
 Yes! he march'd through the great masquerade,  
 loud of tongue,  
 Bold of brow: but the motley he mask'd in, it  
 hung  
 So loose, trail'd so wide, and appear'd to  
 impede

So strangely at times the vex'd effort at speed,  
 That a keen eye might guess it was made—not  
 for him,  
 But some brawler more stalwart of stature and  
 limb.  
 That it irk'd him, in truth, you at times could  
 divine,  
 For when low was the music, and split was  
 the wine  
 He would clutch at the garment, as though  
 it oppress'd  
 And stifled some impulse that choked in his  
 breast.

## x.

What! he, . . . the light sport of his frivolous  
 ease!  
 Was he, too, a prey to a mortal disease?  
 My friend, hear a parable; ponder it well,  
 For a moral there is in the tale that I tell.  
 One evening, I sat in the Palais Royal,  
 And there, while I laugh'd at Grassot and Arnal,  
 My eye fell on the face of a man at my side;  
 Every time that he laugh'd I observed that he  
 sigh'd,  
 As though vex'd to be pleased. I remark'd  
 that he sat  
 Ill at ease on his seat, and kept twirling his hat  
 In his hand, with a look of unquiet abstraction.  
 I inquired the cause of his dissatisfaction.  
 "Sir," he said, "if what vexes me here you  
 would know,  
 Learn that, passing this way some few half-  
 hours ago,

I walked into the Français, to look at Rachel.  
(Sir, that woman in Phedre is a miracle!)—

Well

I ask'd for a box: they were occupied all:  
For a seat in the balcony: all taken! a stall:  
Taken too: the whole house was as full as  
could be,—

Not a hole for a rat! I had just time to see  
The lady I love tete-à-tete with a friend  
In a box out of reach at the opposite end:  
Then the crowd push'd me out. What was  
left me to do?

I tried for the tragedy . . . *que voulez-vous?*  
Every place for the tragedy book'd! . . . *mon*  
*ami.*

The farce was close by: . . . at the farce *me*  
*voici!*

The piece is a new one; and Grassot plays  
well:

There is drollery, too, in that fellow Ravel:  
And Hyacinth's nose is superb! . . . yet I  
meant

My evening elsewhere, and not thus, to have  
spent.

Fate orders these things by her will, not by  
ours!

Sir, mankind is the sport of invisible powers."

I once met the Duc de Luvois for a moment;  
And I mark'd when his features I fix'd in my  
comment,

O'er those features the same vague disquietude  
stray

I had seen on the face of my friend at the  
play;  
And I thought that he too, very probably, spent  
His evenings not wholly as first he had meant.

## XI.

O source of the holiest joys we inherit,  
O Sorrow, thou solemn, invisible spirit!  
Ill fares it with man when, through life's desert  
sand,  
Grown impatient too soon for the long promised  
land,  
He turns from the worship of thee, as thou  
art,  
An expressless and imageless truth in the  
heart,  
And takes of the jewels of Egypt, the pelf  
And the gold of the Godless, to make to him-  
self,  
A gaudy, idolatrous image of thee,  
And then bows to the sound of the cymbal the  
knee.  
The sorrows we make to ourselves are false  
gods;  
Like the prophets of Baal, our bosoms with  
rods  
We may smite, we may gash at our hearts till  
they bleed,  
But these idols are blind, deaf, and dumb to  
our need.  
The land is athirst, and cries out! . . . 'tis in  
vain;  
The great blessing of Heaven descends not in  
rain.

## XII.

It was night; and the lamps were beginning to  
 gleam  
 Through the long linden-trees, folded each in  
 his dream,  
 From that building which looks like a temple  
 . . . and his  
 The Temple of—Health? Nay, but enter! I  
 wish  
 That never the rosy-hued deity knew  
 One votary out of that sallow-cheek'd crew  
 Of Courlanders, Wallacs, Greeks, affable Rus-  
 sians,  
 Explosive Parisians, potato-faced Prussians;  
 Jews—Hamburghers chiefly:—pure patriots.—  
 Suabians;—  
 “Cappadocians and Elamites, Cretes and Arabi-  
 ans,  
 And the dwellers in Pontus” . . . My muse  
 will not weary  
 More lines with the list of them . . . *cur*  
*fremuere?*  
 What is it they murmur, and mutter, and hum?  
 Into what Pandemonium is Pentecost come?  
 Oh, what is the name of the god at whose fane  
 Every nation is mix'd in so motley a train?  
 What weird Kabala lies on those tables out-  
 spread?  
 To what oracle turns with attention each head?  
 What holds these pale worshipers each so  
 devout,  
 And what are those hierophants busied about?

## XIII.

Here passes, repasses, and flits to and fro,  
 And rolls without ceasing the great Yes and  
 No:  
 Round this altar alternate the weird Passions  
 dance,  
 And the God worship'd here is the old God of  
 Chance.  
 Through the wide-open doors of the distant  
 saloon  
 Flute, hautboy, and fiddle are squeaking in  
 tune;  
 And an indistinct music forever is roll'd,  
 That mixes and chimes with the chink of the  
 gold,  
 From a vision, that flits in a luminous haze,  
 Of figures forever eluding the gaze;  
 It fleets through the doorway, it gleams on the  
 glass,  
 And the weird words pursue it—*Rouge Impair,*  
*et Passe!*  
 Like a sound borne in sleep through such  
 dreams as encumber  
 With haggard emotions the wild wicked slum-  
 ber  
 Of some witch when she seeks, through a  
 nightmare, to grab at  
 The hot hoof of the fiend, on her way to the  
 Sabbat.

## XIV.

The Duc de Luvois and Lord Alfred had met  
 Some few evenings ago (for the season as yet

Was but young) in this selfsame Pavilion of  
Chance.

The idler from England, the idler from France  
Shook hands, each, of course, with much cor-  
dial pleasure:

An acquaintance at Ems is to most men a  
treasure,

And they both were too well-bred in aught to  
betray

One discourteous remembrance of things pass'd  
away.

'Twas a sight that was pleasant, indeed, to be  
seen,

These friends exchange greetings;—the men  
who had been

Foes so nearly in days that were past.

This, no doubt

Is why, on the night I am speaking about,  
My Lord Alfred sat down by himself at rou-  
lette,

Without one suspicion his bosom to fret,  
Although he had left, with his pleasant French  
friend,

Matilda, half vex'd, at the room's farthest end.

xv.

Lord Alfred his combat with Fortune began  
With a few modest thalers—away they all  
ran—

The reserve follow'd fast in the rear. As his  
purse

Grew lighter his spirits grew sensibly worse.

One needs not a Bacon to find a cause for it:

'Tis an old law in physics—*Natura abhorret*



*Vacuum*—and my lord, as he watch'd his last  
crown

Tumble into the bank, turn'd away with a  
frown

Which the brows of Napoleon himself might  
have deck'd

On that day of all days when an empire was  
wreck'd

On thy plain, Waterloo, and he witness'd the  
last

Of his favorite Guard cut to pieces, aghast!

Just then Alfred felt, he could scarcely tell  
why,

Within him the sudden strange sense that some  
eye

Had long been intently regarding him there,—  
That some gaze was upon him too searching  
to bear.

He rose and look'd up. Was it fact? Was it  
fable?

Was it dream? Was it waking? Across the  
green table,

That face, with its features so fatally known—  
Those eyes, whose deep gaze answer'd  
strangely his own—

What was it? Some ghost from its grave come  
again?

Some cheat of a feverish, fanciful brain?

Or was it herself—with those deep eyes of hers,  
And that face unforgotten?—Lucile de Nevers!

## XVI.

Ah, well that pale woman a phantom might  
seem,

Who appear'd to herself but the dream of a  
dream!  
'Neath those features so calm, that fair fore-  
head so hush'd,  
That pale cheek forever by passion unflush'd,  
There yawned an insatiate void, and there  
heaved  
A tumult of restless regrets unrelieved.  
A brief noon of beauty was passing away,  
And the chill of the twilight fell, silent and  
gray,  
O'er that deep, self-perceived isolation of soul.  
And now, as all around her the deep evening  
stole,  
With its weird desolations, she inwardly grieved  
For the want of that tender assurance received  
From the warmth of a whisper, the glance of  
an eye,  
Which should say, or should look, "Fear thou  
naught,—I am by!"  
And thus, through that lonely and self-fix'd  
existence,  
Crept a vague sense of silence, and horror, and  
distance:  
A strange sort of faint-footed fear,—like a  
mouse  
That comes out, when 'tis dark, in some old  
ducal house  
Long deserted, where no one the creature can  
scare,  
And the forms on the arras are all that move  
there.

In Rome,—in the Forum,—there open'd one  
night

A gulf. All the augurs turn'd pale at the  
sight.

In this omen the anger of Heaven they read.  
Men consulted the gods: then the oracle  
said:—

“Ever open this gulf shall endure, till at last  
That which Rome hath most precious within  
it be cast.”

The Romans threw in it their corn and their  
stuff,

But the gulf yawn'd as wide. Rome seem'd  
likely enough

To be ruin'd ere this rent in her heart she could  
choke,

Then Curtius, revering the oracle, spoke:

“O Quirites! to this Heaven's question is come:  
What to Rome is more precious? The man-  
hood of Rome.”

He plunged, and the gulf closed.

The tale is not new;

But the moral applies many ways, and is true.

How, for hearts rent in twain, shall the curse  
be destroy'd?

'Tis a warm human life that must fill up the  
void.

Through many a heart runs the rent in the  
fable;

But who to discover a Curtius is able?

xvii.

Back she came from her long hiding-place, at  
the source

Of the sunrise; where, fair in their fabulous  
course,  
Run the rivers of Eden: an exile again,  
To the cities of Europe—the scenes and the  
men,  
And the life, and the ways, she had left: still  
oppress'd  
With the same hungry heart, and unpeaceable  
breast.  
The same, to the same things! The world, she  
had quitted  
With a sigh, with a sigh she re-enter'd. Soon  
flitted  
Through the salons and clubs, to the great sat-  
isfaction  
Of Paris, the news of a novel attraction.  
The enchanting Lucile, the gay Countess, once  
more  
To her old friend, the World, had reopen'd her  
door;  
The World came, and shook hands, and was  
pleased and amused  
With what the World then went away and  
abused.  
From the woman's fair fame it in naught could  
detract:  
'Twas the woman's free genius it vex'd and  
attack'd  
With a sneer at her freedom of action and  
speech.  
But its light careless cavils, in truth, could not  
reach  
The lone heart they aim'd at. Her tears fell  
beyond

The world's limit, to feel that the world could  
respond

To that heart's deepest, innermost yearning,  
in naught.

'Twas no longer this earth's idle inmates she  
sought:

The wit of the woman sufficed to engage  
In the women's gay court the first men of the  
age.

Some had genius; and all, wealth of mind to  
confer

On the world: but that wealth was not lav-  
ish'd for her.

For the genius of man, though so human  
indeed,

When call'd out to man's help by some great  
human need,

The right to a man's chance acquaintance  
refuses

To use what it hoards for mankind's nobler  
uses.

Genius touches the world at but one point  
alone

Of that spacious circumference, never quite  
known

To the world; all the infinite number of lines  
That radiate thither a mere point combines,

But one only,—some central affection apart  
From the reach of the world, in which Genius  
is Heart,

And love, life's fine center, includes heart and  
mind.

And therefore it was that Lucile sigh'd to find  
Men of genius appear, one and all in her ken,

When they stoop'd themselves to it, as mere  
clever men;  
Artists, statesmen, and they in whose works  
are unfurl'd  
Worlds new-fashion'd for man, as mere men of  
the world.  
And so, as alone now she stood, in the sight  
Of the sunset of youth, with her face from the  
light,  
And watch'd her own shadow grow long at her  
feet,  
As though stretch'd out, the shade of some  
other to meet,  
The woman felt homeless and childless: in  
scorn  
She seem'd mock'd by the voices of children  
unborn;  
And when from these somber reflections away  
She turn'd, with a sigh, to that gay world,  
more gay  
For her presence within it, she knew herself  
friendless;  
That her path led from peace, and that path  
appear'd endless!  
That even her beauty had been but a snare,  
And her wit sharpen'd only the edge of  
despair.

## XVIII.

With a face all transfigured and flush'd by  
surprise,  
Alfred turn'd to Lucile. With those deep  
searching eyes

She look'd into his own. Not a word that she  
said,  
Not a look, not a blush, one emotion betray'd.  
She seem'd to smile through him, at something  
beyond:  
When she answer'd his questions, she seem'd  
to respond  
To some voice in herself. With no trouble  
descried,  
To each troubled inquiry she calmly replied,  
Not so he. At the sight of that face back  
again  
To his mind came the ghost of a long stifled  
pain,  
A remember'd resentment, half checked by a  
wild  
And relentless regret like a motherless child  
Softly seeking admittance, with plaintive  
appeal,  
To the heart which resisted its entrance.

Lucile

And himself thus, however, with freedom  
allow'd  
To old friends, talking still side by side, left  
the crowd  
By the crowd unobserv'd. Not unnoticed,  
however,  
By the Duke and Matilda. Matilda had never  
Seen her husband's new friend.

She had follow'd by chance,  
Or by instinct, the sudden half-menacing glance  
Which the Duke, when he witness'd their  
meeting, had turn'd,

On Lucile and Lord Alfred; and, scared, she  
 discern'd  
 On his feature the shade of a gloom so pro-  
 found  
 That she shudder'd instinctively. Deaf to the  
 sound  
 Of her voice, to some startled inquiry of hers  
 He replied not, but murmur'd, "Lucile de  
 Nevers,  
 Once again then? so be it!" In the mind of  
 that man,  
 At that moment, there shaped itself vaguely  
 the plan  
 Of a purpose malignant and dark, such alone  
 (To his own secret heart but imperfectly shown)  
 As could spring from the cloudy, fierce chaos  
 of thought  
 By which all his nature to tumult was wrought.

## XIX.

"So!" he thought, "they meet thus: and  
 reweave the old charm!  
 And she hangs on his voice, and she leans on  
 his arm.  
 And she heeds me not, seeks me not, recks not  
 of me!  
 Oh, what if I show'd her that I, too, can be  
 Loved by one—her own rival—more fair and  
 more young?"  
 The serpent rose in him: a serpent which,  
 stung,  
 Sought to sting.  
 Each unconscious, indeed, of the eye



Fix'd upon them, Lucile and my lord saunter'd by,  
 In converse which seem'd to be earnest. A smile  
 Now and then seem'd to show where their thoughts touch'd. Meanwhile  
 The Muse of this story, convinced that they need her,  
 To the Duke and Matilda returns, gentle Reader.

## xx.

The Duke, with that sort of aggressive false praise  
 Which is meant a resentful remonstrance to raise  
 From a listener (as sometimes a judge, just before  
 He pulls down the black cap, very gently goes o'er  
 The case for the prisoner, and deals tenderly  
 With the man he is minded to hang by and by),  
 Had referr'd to Lucile, and then stopp'd to detect  
 In the face of Matilda the growing effect  
 Of the words he had dropp'd. There's no weapon that slays  
 Its victim so surely (if well aim'd) as praise.  
 Thus, a pause on their converse had fallen: and now  
 Each was silent, preoccupied, thoughtful.  
 You know  
 There are moments when silence, prolong'd  
 and unbroken,

More expressive may be than all words ever  
spoken.

It is when the heart has an instinct of what  
In the heart of another is passing. And that  
In the heart of Matilda, what was it? Whence  
came

To her cheek on a sudden that tremulous flame?  
What weighed down her head?

All your eye could discover  
Was the fact that Matilda was troubled. More-  
over

That trouble the Duke's presence seem'd to  
renew.

She, however, broke silence, the first of the  
two.

The Duke was too prudent to shatter the spell  
Of a silence which suited his purpose so  
well.

She was plucking the leaves from a pale blush  
rose blossom

Which had fall'n from the nosegay she wore  
in her bosom.

"This poor flower," she said, "seems it not  
out of place

In this hot, lamplit air, with its fresh, fragile  
grace?"

She bent her head low as she spoke. With a  
smile

The Duke watch'd her caressing the leaves all  
the while,

And continued on his side the silence. He  
knew

This would force his companion their talk to  
renew

At the point that he wish'd; and Matilda  
 divined  
 The significant pause with new trouble of  
 mind.  
 She lifted one moment her head; but her look  
 Encounter'd the ardent regard of the Duke,  
 And dropp'd back on her floweret abash'd.  
 Then, still seeking  
 The assurance she fancied she show'd him by  
 speaking,  
 She conceived herself safe in adopting again  
 The theme she should most have avoided just  
 then.

## XXI.

"Duke," she said, . . . and she felt, as she  
 spoke, her cheek burn'd,  
 "You know, then, this . . . lady?"  
 "Too well!" he return'd.

## MATILDA.

True; you drew with emotion her portrait just  
 now.

## LUVOIS.

With emotion?

## MATILDA.

Yes, yes! you described her, I know,  
 As possess'd of a charm all unrival'd.

## LUVOIS.

Alas!

You mistook me completely! You, madam,  
 surpass  
 This lady as moonlight does lamplight; as  
 youth

Surpasses its best imitations; as truth  
 The fairest of falsehoods surpasses; as nature  
 Surpasses art's masterpiece; ay, as the creature  
 Fresh and pure in its native adornment sur-  
 passes  
 All the charms got by heart at the world's  
 looking-glasses!  
 "Yet you said,"—she continued with some  
 trepidation,  
 "That you quite comprehended" . . . a slight  
 hesitation  
 Shook the sentence, . . . "a passion so strong  
 as" . . .

LUVOIS.

"True, true!  
 But not in a man that had once look'd at you.  
 Nor can I conceive, or excuse, or . . .  
 "Hush! hush!"  
 She broke in, all more fair for one innocent  
 blush,  
 "Between man and woman these things differ  
 so!  
 It may be that the world pardons . . . (how  
 should I know?)  
 In you what it visits on us; or 'tis true,  
 It may be that we women are better than  
 you."

LUVOIS.

Who denies it? Yet, madam, once more you  
 mistake.  
 The world, in its judgment, some difference may  
 make

'Twixt the man and the woman, so far as  
 respects  
 Its social enchantments; but not as affects  
 The one sentiment which it were easy to  
 prove,  
 Is the sole law we look to the moment we love.

## MATILDA.

That may be. Yet I think I would be less  
 severe,  
 Although so inexperienced in such things, I  
 fear  
 I have learn'd that the heart cannot always  
 repress  
 Or account for the feelings which sway it.  
 "Yes! yes!  
 That is too true, indeed" . . . the Duke sigh'd.  
 And again  
 For one moment in silence continued the twain.

## XXII.

At length the Duke slowly, as though he had  
 needed  
 All this time to repress his emotions, pro-  
 ceeded:  
 "And yet! . . . what avails, then, to woman  
 the gift  
 Of a beauty like yours, if it cannot uplift  
 Her heart from the reach of one doubt, one  
 despair,  
 One pang of wrong'd love, to which women  
 less fair  
 Are exposed, when they love?"  
 With a quick change of tone,

As though by resentment impell'd, he went  
on:—

“The name that you bear, it is whisper'd you  
took

From love, not convention. Well, say, . . .  
that look

So excited, so keen, on the face you must know  
Throughout all its expressions,—that raptur-  
ous glow,

Those eloquent features—significant eyes—  
Which that pale woman sees, yet betrays no  
surprise,”

(He pointed his hand, as he spoke, to the door.  
Fixing with it Lucile and Lord Alfred) . . .  
“before.

Have you ever once seen what just now you  
may view

In that face so familiar? . . . no, lady, 'tis new.  
Young, lovely, and loving, no doubt, as you are,  
Are you loved?” . . .

XXIII.

He look'd at her—paused—felt if thus far  
The ground held yet. The ardor with which  
he had spoken,

This close, rapid question, thus suddenly  
broken,

Inspired in Matilda a vague sense of fear,  
As though some indefinite danger were near.  
With composure, however, at once she re-  
plied:—

“ 'Tis three years since the day when I first  
was a bride,

And my husband I never had cause to suspect;

Nor ever have stoop'd, sir, such cause to detect.

Yet if in his looks or his acts I should see—  
See, or fancy—some moment's oblivion of me,  
I trust that I too should forget it,—for you  
Must have seen that my heart is my husband's."

The hue

On her cheek, with the effort wherewith to the  
Duke  
She had uttered this vague and half frightened  
rebuke,  
Was white as the rose in her hand. The last  
word  
Seem'd to die on her lip, and could scarcely  
be heard.

There was silence again,  
A great step had been made  
By the Duke in the words he that evening had  
said.

There, half drown'd by the music, Matilda,  
that night,  
Had listen'd,—long listen'd—no doubt, in de-  
spite  
Of herself, to a voice she should never have  
heard,  
And her heart by that voice had been troubled  
and stirr'd.

And so having suffered in silence his eye  
To fathom her own, he resumed, with a sigh:

## XXIV.

"Will you suffer me, lady, your thoughts to  
invade

By disclosing my own? The position," he  
said,

"In which we so strangely seem placed may  
excuse

The frankness and force of the words which I  
use.

You say that your heart is your husband's:  
You say

That you love him. You think so, of course,  
lady . . . nay,

Such a love, I admit, were a merit, no doubt.  
But, trust me, no true love there can be with-  
out

Its dread penalty—jealousy.

"Well, do not start!

Until now,—either thanks to a singular art  
Of supreme self-control, you have held them  
all down

Unreveal'd in your heart,—or you never have  
known

Even one of those fierce irresistible pangs  
Which deep passion engenders, that anguish  
which hangs

On the heart like a nightmare, by jealousy  
bred.

But if, lady, the love you describe, in the bed  
Of a blissful security thus hath reposed  
Undisturb'd, with mild eyelids on happiness  
closed,

Were it not to expose to a peril unjust,  
And most cruel, that happy repose you so  
trust,

To meet, to receive, and, indeed, it may be,  
For how long I know not, continue to see



A woman whose place rivals yours in the life  
And the heart which not only your title of  
wife,

But also (forgive me!) your beauty alone,  
Should have made wholly yours?—You, who  
gave all your own!

Reflect!—'tis the peace of existence you stake  
On the turn of a die. And for whose—for his  
sake?

While you witness this woman, the false point  
of view

From which she must now be regarded by you  
Will exaggerate to you, whatever they be,  
The charms I admit she possesses. To me  
They are trivial indeed; yet to your eyes, I  
fear

And foresee, they will true and intrinsic  
appear.

Self-unconscious, and sweetly unable to guess  
How more lovely by far is the grace you pos-  
sess,

You will wrong your own beauty. The graces  
of art,

You will take for the natural charm of the  
heart;

Studied manners, the brilliant and bold re-  
partee,

Will too soon in that fatal comparison be  
To your fancy more fair than the sweet timid  
sense

Which, in shrinking, betrays its own best elo-  
quence.

O then, lady, then, you will feel in your heart  
The poisonous pain of a fierce jealous dart!

While you see her, yourself you no longer will  
 see,—  
 You will hear her, and hear not yourself,—you  
 will be  
 Unhappy; unhappy, because you will deem  
 Your old power less great than her power  
 will seem.  
 And I shall not be by your side, day by day,  
 In despite of your noble displeasure, to say  
 ‘You are fairer than she, as the star is more  
 fair  
 Than the diamond, the brightest that beauty  
 can wear!’ ”

## xxv.

This appeal, both by looks and by language,  
 increased  
 The trouble Matilda felt grow in her breast.  
 Still she spoke with what calmness she could—  
 “Sir, the while  
 I thank you,” she said, with a faint scornful  
 smile,  
 “For your fervor in painting my fancied dis-  
 tress:  
 Allow me the right some surprise to express  
 At the zeal you betray in disclosing to me  
 The possible depth of my own misery.”  
 “That zeal would not startle you, madam,” he  
 said,  
 “Could you read in my heart, as myself I have  
 read,  
 The peculiar interest which causes that zeal—”  
 Matilda her terror no more could conceal.

"Duke," she answer'd in accents short, cold  
 and severe,  
 As she rose from her seat, "I continue to hear;  
 But permit me to say, I no more understand."  
 "Forgive!" with a nervous appeal of the hand,  
 And a well-feign'd confusion of voice and of  
 look,  
 "Forgive, oh, forgive me!" at once cried the  
 Duke.  
 "I forgot that you know me so slightly. Your  
 leave  
 I entreat (from your anger those words to re-  
 trieve)  
 For one moment to speak of myself,—for I  
 think  
 That you wrong me—"  
 His voice, as in pain, seem'd to sink;  
 And tears in his eyes, as he lifted them,  
 glisten'd.

## XXVI.

Matilda, despite of herself, sat and listen'd.

## XXVII.

"Beneath an exterior which seems, and may  
 be,  
 Worldly, frivolous, careless, my heart hides in  
 me,"  
 He continued, "a sorrow which draws me to  
 side  
 With all things that suffer. Nay, laugh not,"  
 he cried,  
 "At so strange an avowal.  
 "I seek at a ball,

For instance,—the beauty admired by all?  
 No! some plain, insignificant creature, who  
     sits  
 Scorn'd of course by the beauties, and shunn'd  
     by the wits  
 All the world is accustom'd to wound, or  
     neglect,  
 Or oppress, claims my heart and commands  
     my respect.  
 No Quixote, I do not affect to belong,  
 I admit, to those charter'd redressers of wrong;  
 But I seek to console, where I can. 'Tis a  
     part  
 Not brilliant, I own, yet its joys bring no  
     smart."

These trite words, from the tone which he  
     gave them received  
 An appearance of truth which might well be  
     believed  
 By a heart shrewder yet than Matilda's.

And so

He continued . . . "O lady! alas, could you  
     know  
 What injustice and wrong in this world I have  
     seen!  
 How many a woman, believed to have been  
 Without a regret, I have known turn aside  
 To burst into heartbroken tears undescried!  
 On how many a lip have I witness'd the smile  
 Which but hid what was breaking the poor  
     heart the while!"

Said Matilda, "Your life, it would seem, then,  
     must be  
 One long act of devotion."

"Perhaps so," said he;  
 "But at least that devotion small merit can  
     boast,  
 For one day may yet come,—if one day at the  
     most,  
 When, perceiving at last all the difference—  
     how great!—  
 'Twixt the heart that neglects, and the heart  
     that can wait,  
 'Twixt the natures that pity, the natures that  
     pain,  
 Some woman, that else might have pass'd in  
     disdain  
 Or indifference by me,—in passing that day  
 Might pause with a word or a smile to repay  
 This devotion,—and then" . . .

## xxviii.

                                    To Matilda's relief  
 At that moment her husband approach'd  
                                     With some grief  
 I must own that her welcome, perchance, was  
     express'd  
 The more eagerly just for one twinge in her  
     breast  
 Of a conscience disturb'd, and her smile not  
     less warm;  
 Though she saw the Comtesse de Nevers on  
     his arm  
 The Duke turn'd and adjusted his collar.  
                                     Thought he,  
 "Good! the gods fight my battle to-night. I  
     foresee  
 That the family doctor's the part I must play.

Very well! but the patients my visits shall  
pay."

Lord Alfred presented Lucile to his wife;  
And Matilda, repressing with effort the strife  
Of emotions which made her voice shake, mur-  
mur'd low

Some faint, troubled greeting. The Duke,  
with a bow

Which betoken'd a distant defiance, replied  
To Lucile's startled cry, as surprised she de-  
scried

Her former gay wooer. Anon, with the grace  
Of that kindness which seeks to win kindness,  
her place

She assumed by Matilda, unconscious, per-  
chance,

Or resolved not to notice the half-frighten'd  
glance

That follow'd that movement.

The Duke to his feet  
Arose; and, in silence, relinquish'd his seat.

One must own that the moment was awkward  
for all;

But nevertheless, before long, the strange thrall  
Of Lucile's gracious tact was by every one felt,  
And from each the reserve seem'd, reluctant,  
to melt;

Thus, conversing together, the whole of the  
four

Thro' the crowd saunter'd smiling.

## XXIX.

Approaching the door,  
Eugene de Luvois, who had fallen behind,  
By Lucile, after some hesitation, was join'd  
With a gesture of gentle and kindly appeal,  
Which appear'd to imply, without words, "Let  
us feel

That the friendship between us in years that  
are fled  
Has survived one mad moment forgotten," she  
said,

"You remain, Duke, at Ems?"

He turn'd on her a look  
Of frigid, resentful, and sullen rebuke;  
And then, with a more than significant glance  
At Matilda, maliciously answer'd, "Perchance  
I have here an attraction. And you?" he  
return'd.

Lucile's eyes had follow'd his own, and dis-  
cern'd

The boast they implied.

He repeated, "And you?"  
And, still watching Matilda, she answered, "I  
too."

And he thought, as with that word she left  
him, she sigh'd.

The next moment her place she resumed by the  
side

Of Matilda; and soon they shook hands at the  
gate

Of the selfsame hotel.

xxx.

One depress'd, one elate,  
The Duke and Lord Alfred again, thro' the  
glooms

Of the thick linden alley, return'd to the  
Rooms.

His cigar each had lighted, a moment before,  
At the inn, as they turn'd, arm-in-arm, from  
the door.

Ems cigars do not cheer a man's spirits *experto*  
(*Me miserum quoties!*) *crede Roberto*.

In silence, awhile, they walk'd onward.

At last

The Duke's thoughts to language half con-  
sciously pass'd.

LUVOIS.

Once more! yet once more!

ALFRED.

What?

LUVOIS.

We meet her, once more,  
The woman for whom we two madmen of yore  
(Laugh, *mon cher* Alfred, laugh!) were about  
to destroy

Each other!

ALFRED.

It is not with laughter that I  
Raise the ghost of that once troubled time.

Say! can you  
Recall it with coolness and quietude now?



LUVOIS.

Now? yes! I, *mon cher*, am a true *Parisien*:  
Now, the red revolution, the tocsin, and then  
The dance and the play. I am now at the play.

ALFRED.

At the play, are you now? Then perchance I  
now may  
Presume, Duke, to ask you what, ever until  
Such a moment, I waited . . .

LUVOIS.

Oh! ask what you will  
*Franc jeu!* on the table my cards I spread out.  
Ask!

ALFRED.

Duke, you were call'd to a meeting (no doubt  
You remember it yet) with Lucile. It was  
night  
When you went; and before you return'd it  
was light.  
We met: you accosted me then with a brow  
Bright with triumph: your words (you remem-  
ber them now!)  
Were "Let us be friends!"

LUVOIS.

Well?

ALFRED.

How then, after that,  
Can you and she meet as acquaintances?

LUVOIS.

What!

Did she not then, herself, the Comtesse de  
Nevers,  
Solve your riddle to-night with those soft lips  
of hers?

ALFRED.

In our converse to-night we avoided the past.  
But the question I ask should be answered at  
last:  
By you, if you will; if you will not, by her.

LUVOIS.

Indeed? but that question, milord, can it stir  
Such an interest in you, if your passion be o'er?

ALFRED.

Yes. Esteem may remain, although love be  
no more.  
Lucile ask'd me, this night, to my wife (under-  
stand  
To my wife!) to present her. I did so. Her  
hand  
Has clasp'd that of Matilda. We gentlemen  
owe  
Respect to the name that is ours: and, if so,  
To the woman that bears it a twofold respect.  
Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile then  
reject  
The proffer you made of your hand and your  
name?  
Or did you on her love then relinquish a claim  
Urged before? I ask bluntly this question,  
because

My title to do so is clear by the laws  
 That all gentlemen honor. Make only one  
 sign  
 That you know of Lucile de Nevers aught, in  
 fine,  
 For which, if your own virgin sister were by,  
 From Lucile you would shield her acquaint-  
 ance, and I  
 And Matilda leave Ems on the morrow.

## xxxI.

The Duke

Hesitated and paused. He could tell, by the  
 look  
 Of the man at his side, that he meant what he  
 said,  
 And there flash'd in a moment these thoughts  
 through his head:  
 "Leave Ems! would that suit me? no! that  
 were again  
 To mar all. And besides, if I do not explain,  
 She herself will . . . *et puis, il a raison: on est*  
*Gentilhomme avant tout!*" He replied there-  
 fore, "Nay!  
 Madame de Nevers had rejected me. I,  
 In those days, I was mad; and in some mad  
 reply  
 I threatened the life of the rival to whom  
 That rejection was due, I was led to presume.  
 She fear'd for his life; and the letter which  
 then  
 She wrote me, I show'd you: we met: and  
 again  
 My hand was refused, and my love was denied,

And the glance you mistook was the vizard  
 which Pride  
 Lends to Humiliation.

“And so,” half in jest,  
 He went on, “in this best world, ’tis all for the  
 best;

You are wedded (bless’d Englishman!), wedded  
 to one

Whose past can be call’d into question by none:  
 And I (fickle Frenchman!) can still laugh to  
 feel

I am lord of myself, and the Mode: and Lucile  
 Still shines from her pedestal, frigid and fair  
 As yon German moon o’er the linden-tops there!  
 A Dian in marble that scorns any troth

With the little love-gods, whom I thank for us  
 both,

While she smiles from her lonely Olympus  
 apart,

That her arrows are marble as well as her  
 heart.

Stay at Ems, Alfred Vargrave!”

xxxii.

The Duke, with a smile,  
 Turn’d and enter’d the Rooms which, thus  
 talking meanwhile,  
 They had reach’d.

xxxiii.

Alfred Vargrave strode on (overthrown  
 Heart and mind!) in the darkness bewilder’d  
 alone:

“And so,” to himself did he mutter, “and so  
 ’Twas to rescue my life, gentle spirit! and, oh,

For this did I doubt her! . . . , a light word—  
a look—

The mistake of a moment! . . . for this I for-  
sook—

For this? Pardon, pardon, Lucile! O Lucile!"  
Thought and memory rang, like a funeral peal,  
Weary changes on one dirge-like note through  
his brain,

As he stray'd down the darkness.

## xxxiv.

Re-entering again

The Casino, the Duke smiled. He turn'd to  
roulette,

And sat down, and play'd fast, and lost largely,  
and yet

He still smiled; night deepen'd: he play'd his  
last number;

Went home: and soon slept: and still smil'd in  
his slumber.

## xxxv.

In his desolate Maxims, La Rochefoucauld  
wrote,

"In the grief or mischance of a friend you may  
note,

There is something which always gives pleas-  
ure."

Alas!

That reflections fell short of the truth as it was.  
La Rochefoucauld might have as truly set  
down—

"No misfortune, but what some one turns to  
his own

Advantage its mischief: no sorrow, but of it

There ever is somebody ready to profit:  
 No affliction without its stock-jobbers, who all  
 Gamble, speculate, play on the rise and the fall  
 Of another man's heart, and make traffic in  
 it."

Burn thy book, O La Rochefoucauld!

Fool! one man's wit

All men's selfishness how should it fathom?

O sage,

Dost thou satirize Nature?

She laughs at thy page.

## CANTO II.

### I.

COUSIN JOHN TO COUSIN ALFRED.

"London, 18—

"My dear Alfred,

This contempt of existence, this listless disdain  
 Of your own life,—its joys and its duties,—the  
 deuce

Take my wits if they find for it half an excuse!  
 I wish that some Frenchman would shoot off  
 your leg,

And compel you to stump through the world  
 on a peg.

I wish that you had, like myself (more's the  
 pity!),

To sit seven hours on this cursed committee.

I wish that you knew, sir, how salt is the bread  
 Of another—(what is it that Dante has said?)

And the trouble of other men's stairs. In a  
word,

I wish fate had some real affliction conferr'd  
On your whimsical self, that, at least, you had  
cause

For neglecting life's duties, and damning its  
laws!

This pressure against all the purpose of life,  
This self-ebullition, and ferment, and strife,  
Betoken'd I grant that it may be in truth,  
The richness and strength of the new wine of  
youth.

But if, when the wine should have mellow'd  
with time,

Being bottled and binn'd, to a flavor sublime  
It retains the same acrid, incongruous taste,  
Why, the sooner to throw it away that we haste  
The better, I take it. And this vice of snarl-  
ing,

Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed darling  
Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears,  
To my thinking, at least, in a man of your  
years,

At the midnight of manhood with plenty to do,  
And every incentive for doing it, too,  
With the duties of life just sufficiently pressing  
For prayer, and of joys more than most men  
for blessing;

With a pretty young wife, and a pretty full  
purse,—

Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or worse!

I wish I could get you at least to agree

To take life as it is, and consider with me

If it be not all smiles, that it is not all sneers;

It admits honest laughter, and needs honest  
tears.

Do you think none have known but yourself all  
the pain

Of hopes that retreat, and regrets that remain?  
And all the wide distance fate fixes, no doubt,  
'Twixt the life that's within, and the life that's  
without?

What one of us finds the world just as he likes?  
Or gets what he wants when he wants it? Or  
strikes

Without missing the thing that he strikes at  
the first?

Or walks without stumbling? Or quenches his  
thirst

At one draught? Bah! I tell you! I, bach-  
elor John,

Have had griefs of my own. But what then?  
I push on

All the faster perchance that I yet feel the pain  
Of my last fall, albeit I may stumble again.

God means every man to be happy, be sure.

He sends us no sorrows that have not some  
cure.

Our duty down here is to do, not to know.

Live as though life were earnest, and life will  
be so.

Let each moment, like Time's last ambassador,  
come:

It will wait to deliver its message; and some  
Sort of answer it merits. It is not the deed

A man does, but the way that he does it, should  
plead

For the man's compensation in doing it.



“Here,

My next neighbor's a man with twelve thousand a year,  
Who deems that life has not a pastime more pleasant

Than to follow a fox, or to slaughter a pheasant.

Yet this fellow goes through a contested election,

Lives in London, and sits, like the soul of dejection,

All the day through upon a committee, and late

To the last, every night, through the dreary debate,

As though he were getting each speaker by heart,

Though amongst them he never presumes to take part

One asks himself why, without murmur or question,

He foregoes all his tastes, and destroys his digestion,

For a labor of which the result seems so small.

‘The man is ambitious,’ you say. Not at all.

He has just sense enough to be fully aware

That he never can hope to be Premier, or share

The renown of a Tully;—or even to hold

A subordinate office. He is not so bold

As to fancy the House for ten minutes would bear

With patience his modest opinions to hear.

‘But he wants something!’

“What! with twelve thousand a year?”

What could Government give him would be  
half so dear

To his heart as a walk with a dog and a gun  
Through his own pheasant woods, or a capital  
run?

'No; but vanity fills out the emptiest brain;  
The man would be more than his neighbor, 'tis  
plain;

And the drudgery drearily gone through in  
town

Is more than repaid by provincial renown.  
Enough if some Marchioness, lively and loose,  
Shall have eyed him with passing complaisance;  
the goose,

If the Fashion to him open one of its doors,  
As proud as a sultan, returns to his boors.'

Wrong again! if you think so.

“For, primo; my friend  
Is the head of a family known from one end  
Of his shire to the other, as the oldest; and  
therefore

He despises fine lords and fine ladies. He care  
for

A peerage? no truly! Secondo; he rarely  
Or never goes out: dines at Bellamy's sparely,  
And abhors what you call the gay world.

“Then, I ask,  
What inspires, and consoles, such a self-im-  
posed task

As the life of this man,—but the sense of its  
duty?

And I swear that the eyes of the haughtiest  
beauty

Have never inspired in my soul that intense

Reverential, and loving, and absolute sense  
Of heart-felt admiration I feel for this man,  
As I see him beside me;—there, wearing the  
wan

London daylight away, on his humdrum com-  
mittee;

So unconscious of all that awakens my pity,  
And wonder—and worship, I might say.

“To me  
There seems something nobler than genius to  
be

In that dull patient labor no genius relieves,  
That absence of all joy which yet never grieves;  
The humility of it! the grandeur withal!

The sublimity of it! And yet should you call  
The man's own very slow apprehension to this,  
He would ask, with a stare, what sublimity is!  
His work is the duty to which he was born;  
He accepts it, without ostentation or scorn:  
And this man is no uncommon type (I thank  
Heaven!)

Of this land's common men. In all other lands,  
even

The type's self is wanting. Perchance, 'tis the  
reason

That Government oscillates ever 'twixt treason  
And tyranny elsewhere.

“I wander away  
Too far, though, from what I was wishing to  
say.

You, for instance, read Plato. You know that  
the soul

Is immortal; and put this in rhyme, on the  
whole,

Very well, with sublime illustration. Man's  
heart

Is a mystery, doubtless. You trace it in art:—  
The Greek Psyche,—that's beauty,—the per-  
fect ideal.

But then comes the imperfect, perfectible real,  
With its pain'd aspiration and strife. In those  
pale

Ill-drawn virgins of Giotto you see it prevail.  
You have studied all this. Then, the universe,  
too,

Is not a mere house to be lived in, for you.  
Geology opens the mind. So you know  
Something also of strata and fossils; these  
show

The bases of cosmical structure: some mention  
Of the nebulous theory demands your atten-  
tion;

And so on.

“In short, it is clear the interior  
Of your brain, my dear Alfred, is vastly supe-  
rior

In fiber, and fullness, and function, and fire,  
To that of my poor parliamentary squire;  
But your life leaves upon me (forgive me this  
heat

Due to friendship) the sense of a thing incom-  
plete.

You fly high. But what is it, in truth, you  
fly at?

My mind is not satisfied quite as to that.  
An old illustration's as good as a new,  
Provided the old illustration be true.

We are children. Mere kites are the fancies  
 we fly,  
 Though we marvel to see them ascending so  
 high;  
 Things slight in themselves,—long-tail'd toys,  
 and no more:

What is it that makes the kite steadily soar  
 Through the realms where the cloud and the  
 whirlwind have birth

But the tie that attaches the kite to the earth?  
 I remember the lessons of childhood, you  
 see,

And the hornbook I learn'd on my mother's  
 knee,

In truth, I suspect little else do we learn  
 From this great book of life, which so shrewdly  
 we turn,

Saving how to apply, with a good or bad grace,  
 What we learn'd in the hornbook of childhood.

“Your case

Is exactly in point.

“Fly your kite, if you please,  
 Out of sight: let it go where it will on the  
 breeze;

But cut not the one thread by which it is bound,  
 Be it never so high, to the poor human ground.  
 No man is the absolute lord of his life.

You, my friend, have a home, and a sweet and  
 dear wife.

If I often have sigh'd by my own silent fire,  
 With the sense of a sometimes recurring desire  
 For a voice sweet and low, or a face fond and  
 fair,

Some dull winter evening to solace and share

With the love which the world its good children  
allows  
To shake hands with,—in short, a legitimate  
spouse,  
This thought has consoled me: 'at least I have  
given  
For my own good behavior no hostage to  
heaven.'  
You have, though. Forget it not! faith, if  
you do,  
I would rather break stones on a road than be  
you.  
If any man willfully injured, or led  
That little girl wrong, I would sit on his  
head  
Even though you yourself were the sinner!  
"And this  
Leads me back (do not take it, dear cousin,  
amiss!)  
To the matter I meant to have mention'd, at  
once,  
But these thoughts put it out of my head for  
the nonce.  
Of all the preposterous humbugs and shams,  
Of all the old wolves ever taken for lambs,  
The wolves best received by the flocks he  
devours  
Is that uncle-in-law, my dear Alfred, of yours.  
At least, this has long been my settled con-  
viction,  
And I almost would venture at once the pre-  
diction  
That before very long—but no matter! I  
trust

For his sake and our own; that I may be unjust.

But Heaven forgive me, if cautious I am on  
The score of such men as, with both God and  
Mammon,  
Seem so shrewdly familiar.

“Neglect not this warning.

There were rumors afloat in the city this  
morning

Which I scarce like the sound of. Who knows?  
would he fleece

At a pinch, the old hypocrite, even his own  
niece?

For the sake of Matilda I cannot importune  
Your attention too early. If all your wife’s  
fortune

Is yet in the hands of that specious old sinner,  
Who would dice with the devil, and yet rise up  
winner,

I say, lose no time! get it out of the grab  
Of her trustee and uncle, Sir Ridley MacNab.  
I trust those deposits, at least, are drawn  
out,

And safe at this moment from danger or doubt.

A wink is as good as a nod to the wise  
*Verbum sap.* I admit nothing yet justifies

My mistrust; but I have in my own mind a  
notion

That old Ridley’s white waistcoat, and airs of  
devotion,

Have long been the only ostensible capital

On which he does business. If so, time must  
sap it all

Sooner or later. Look sharp. Do not wait,

Draw at once. In a fortnight it may be too late.

I admit I know nothing. I can but suspect; I give you my notions. Form yours and reflect. My love to Matilda. Her mother looks well. I saw her last week. I have nothing to tell Worth your hearing. We think that the Government here

Will not last our next session. Fitz Funk is a peer,

You will see by the Times. There are symptoms which show

That the ministers now are preparing to go And finish their feasts of the loaves and the fishes.

It is evident they are clearing the dishes, And cramming their pockets with bonbons.

Your news

Will be always acceptable. Vere, of the Blues,

Has bolted with Lady Selina. And so, You have met with that hot-headed Frenchman? I know

That the man is a sad *mauvais sujet*. Take care

Of Matilda, I wish I could join you both there; But, before I am free, you are sure to be gone.

Good-by, my dear fellow. Yours anxiously,  
JOHN."

## II.

This is just the advice I myself would have given



To Lord Alfred, had I been his cousin which  
Heaven

Be praised, I am not. But it reach'd him in-  
deed

In an unlucky hour, and received little heed.

A half-languid glance was the most that he  
lent at

That time to these homilies. *Primum dementai  
Quem Deus vult perdere.* Alfred in fact

Was behaving just then in a way to distract

Job's self had Job known him. The more you'd  
have thought

The Duke's court to Matilda his eye would  
have caught,

The more did his aspect grow listless to hers,

And the more did it beam to Lucile de Nevers.

And Matilda, the less she found love in the  
look

Of her husband, the less did she shrink from  
the Duke

With each day that pass'd o'er them, they  
each, heart from heart,

Woke to feel themselves further and further  
apart.

More and more of his time Alfred pass'd at the  
table;

Played high; and lost more than to lose he  
was able.

He grew feverish, querulous, absent, perverse—  
And here I must mention, what made matters  
worse.

That Lucile and the Duke at the selfsame hotel  
With the Vargraves resided. It needs not to  
tell

That they all saw too much of each other.  
 The weather  
 Was so fine that it brought them each day all  
 together  
 In the garden, to listen, of course, to the  
 band  
 The house was a sort of phalanstery; and  
 Lucile and Matilda were pleased to discover  
 A mutual passion for music. Moreover  
 The Duke was an excellent tenor; could sing  
 "*Ange si pure*" in a way to bring down on the  
 wing  
 All the angels St. Cicely play'd to. My lord  
 Would also at times, when he was not too  
 bored,  
 Play Beethoven, and Wagner's new music, not  
 ill;  
 With some little things of his own, showing  
 skill  
 For which reason, as for some others too,  
 Their rooms were a pleasant enough rendez-  
 vous,  
 Did Lucile, then, encourage (the heartless  
 coquette!)  
 All the mischief she could not but mark?  
 Patience yet.

## III.

In that garden, an arbor, withdrawn from the  
 sun,  
 By laburnum and lilac with blooms overrun,  
 Form'd a vault of cool verdure, which made,  
 when the heat

Of the noontide hung heavy, a gracious retreat.  
And here, with some friends of their own little  
world,  
In the warm afternoons, till the shadows un-  
curl'd  
From the feet of the lindens, and crept through  
the grass,  
Their blue hours would this gay little colony  
pass.  
The men loved to smoke, and the women to  
bring,  
Undeterred by tobacco, their work there, and  
sing  
Or converse, till the dew fell, and homeward  
the bee  
Floated, heavy with honey. Towards eve  
there was tea  
(A luxury due to Matilda,) and ice,  
Fruit, and coffee.  
Such an evening it was, while Matilda presided  
O'er the rustic arrangements thus daily pro-  
vided,  
With the Duke, and a small German Prince  
with a thick head,  
And an old Russian Countess both witty and  
wicked,  
And two Austrian Colonels,—that Alfred, who  
yet  
Was lounging alone with his last cigarette,  
Saw Lucile de Nevers by herself pacing slow  
'Neath the shade of the cool linden trees to and  
fro,  
And joining her, cried, "Thank the good stars,  
we meet! -"

I have so much to say to you!"

"Yes? . . ." with her sweet  
Serene voice, she replied to him . . . "Yes?  
and I too

Was wishing, indeed, to say somewhat to you."  
She was paler just then than her wont was.

The sound

Of her voice had within it a sadness profound.  
"You are ill!" he exclaim'd.

"No!" she hurriedly said,  
"No, no!"

"You alarm me!"

She droop'd down her head.

"If your thoughts have of late sought, or cared,  
to divine

The purpose of what has been passing in mine,  
My farewell can scarcely alarm you."

ALFRED.

Your farewell! you go!

Lucile!

LUCILE.

Yes, Lord Alfred.

ALFRED.

Reveal

The cause of this sudden unkindness.

LUCILE.

Unkind?

ALFRED.

Yes! what else is this parting?

LUCILE.

No, no! are you blind?  
 Look into your own heart and home. Can you  
 see  
 No reason for this, save unkindness in me?  
 Look into the eyes of your wife—those true  
 eyes  
 Too pure and too honest in aught to disguise  
 The sweet soul shining through them.

ALFRED.

Lucile! (first and last  
 Be the word, if you will!) let me speak of the  
 past.  
 I know now, alas! though I know it too late,  
 What pass'd at that meeting which settled my  
 fate,  
 Nay, nay, interrupt me not yet! let it be!  
 I but say what is due to yourself—due to me  
 And must say it.

He rush'd incoherently on  
 Describing how, lately, the truth he had known,  
 To explain how, and whence, he had wrong'd  
 her before  
 All the complicate coil wound about him of  
 yore,  
 All the hopes that had flown with the faith that  
 was fled,  
 "And then, O Lucile, what was left me," he  
 said,  
 "When my life was defrauded of you, but to  
 take  
 That life, as 'twas left, and endeavor to make

Unobserved by another, the void which re-  
 main'd  
 Unconcern'd to myself? If I have not attain'd,  
 I have striven. One word of unkindness has  
 never  
 Pass'd my lips to Matilda. Her least wish has  
 ever  
 Received my submission. And if, of a truth,  
 I have fail'd to renew what I felt in my youth,  
 I at least have been loyal to what I do feel,  
 Respect, duty, honor, affection. Lucile,  
 I speak not of love, now, nor love's long re-  
 gret!  
 I would not offend you, nor dare I forget  
 The ties that are round me. But may there  
 not be  
 A friendship yet hallow'd between you and me?  
 May we not be yet friends — friends the  
 dearest?"

“Alas!”

She replied, “for one moment, perchance, did  
 it pass  
 Through my own heart, that dream which for-  
 ever hath brought  
 To those who indulge it in innocent thought  
 So fatal and evil a waking! But no.  
 For in lives such as ours are, the Dream-tree  
 would grow  
 On the borders of Hades: beyond it, what  
 lies?  
 The wheel of Ixion, alas! and the cries  
 Of the lost and tormented. Departed, for us,  
 Are the days when with innocence we could  
 discuss

Dreams like these. Fled, indeed, are the  
dreams of my life!

Oh trust me, the best friend you have is your  
wife.

And I—in that pure child's pure virtue, I bow  
To the beauty of virtue. I felt on my brow  
Not one blush when I first took her hand.

With no blush

Shall I clasp it to-night, when I leave you.

“Hush! hush

I would say that I wish'd to have said when  
you came.

Do not think that years leave us and find us  
the same!

The woman you knew long ago, long ago,  
Is no more. You yourself have within you, I  
know,

The germ of a joy in the years yet to be,  
Whereby the past years will bear fruit. As  
for me,

I go my own way,—onward, upward!

“O yet,

Let me thank you for that which ennobled  
regret,

When it came, as it beautified hope ere it  
fled,—

The love I once felt for you. True, it is dead,  
But it is not corrupted. I too have at last

Lived to learn that love is not—(such love as is  
past,

Such love as youth dreams of at least)—the  
sole part

Of life, which is able to fill up the heart;

Even that of a woman.

“Between you and me  
 Heaven fixes a gulf, over which you must see  
 That our guardian angels can bear us no more.  
 We each of us stand on an opposite shore,  
 Trust a woman’s opinion for once. Women  
     learn,  
 By an instinct men never attain, to discern  
 Each other’s true natures. Matilda is fair,  
 Matilda is young—see her now, sitting there!—  
 How tenderly fashion’d—(oh, is she not? say,)  
 To love and be loved!”

## IV.

He turn’d sharply away  
 “Matilda is young, and Matilda is fair;  
 Of all that you tell me pray deem me aware;  
 But Matilda’s a statue, Matilda’s a child; Ma-  
     tilda loves not—”

Lucile quietly smiled  
 As she answer’d him:—“Yesterday, all that  
     you say  
 Might be true; it is false, wholly false, though,  
     to-day.”

“How?—what mean you?”

“I mean that to-day,” she replied,  
 “The statue with life has become vivified;  
 I mean that the child to a woman has grown;  
 And that woman is jealous.”

“What! she?” with a tone  
 Of ironical wonder, he answer’d—“what she!  
 She jealous!—Matilda!—of whom, pray?—not  
     me!”

“My lord, you deceive yourself; no one but  
     you



Is she jealous of. Trust me. And thank  
 heaven, too,  
 That so lately this passion within her hath  
 grown.

For who shall declare, if for months she had  
 known

What for days she has known all too keenly,  
 I fear,

That knowledge perchance might have cost  
 you more dear?"

"Explain! explain, madam!" he cried in sur-  
 prise;

And terror and anger enkindled his eyes.

"How blind are you men!" she replied. "Can  
 you doubt

That a woman, young, fair, and neglected—"  
 "Speak out!"

He gasp'd with emotion. "Lucile! you mean  
 —what?

Do you doubt her fidelity?"

"Certainly not.

Listen to me, my friend. What I wish to  
 explain

Is so hard to shape forth. I could almost  
 refrain

From touching a subject so fragile. However,  
 Bear with me awhile, if I frankly endeavor

To invade for one moment your innermost life.  
 Your honor, Lord Alfred, and that of your  
 wife,

Are dear to me,—most dear! And I am con-  
 vinced

That you rashly are risking that honor."

He winced,

And turn'd pale, as she spoke,

She had aim'd at his heart,  
 And she saw, by his sudden and terrified start  
 That her aim had not miss'd,

“Stay, Lucile!” he exclaim'd,  
 “What in truth do you mean by these words,  
 vaguely framed  
 To alarm me? Matilda?—my wife?—do you  
 know?”—

“I know that your wife is as spotless as snow.  
 But I know not how far your continued neglect  
 Her nature, as well as her heart, might affect.  
 Till at last, by degrees, that serene atmosphere  
 Of her unconscious purity, faint and yet clear,  
 Like the indistinct golden and vaporous fleece  
 Which surrounded and hid the celestials in  
 Greece

From the glances of men, would disperse and  
 depart

At the sighs of a sick and delirious heart,—  
 For jealousy is to a woman, be sure,  
 A disease heal'd too oft by a criminal cure;  
 And the heart left too long to its ravage in  
 time

May find weakness in virtue, reprisal in crime.”

v.

“Such thoughts could have never,” he falter'd,  
 “I know,  
 Reach'd the heart of Matilda.”

“Matilda? oh, no!  
 But reflect! when such thoughts do not come  
 of themselves  
 To the heart of a woman neglected, like elves

That seek lonely places,—there rarely is want-  
ing

Some voice at her side, with an evil enchanting  
To conjure them to her."

"O lady, beware!

At this moment, around me I search every-  
where

For a clew to your words"—

"You mistake them," she said,  
Half-fearing, indeed, the effect they had made,  
"I was putting a mere hypothetical case."

With a long look of trouble he gazed in her  
face.

"Woe to him, . . ." he exclaim'd . . . "woe  
to him that shall feel

Such a hope! for I swear if he did but reveal  
One glimpse,—it should be the last hope of his  
life!"

The clench'd hand and bent eyebrow beto-  
ken'd the strife

She had roused in his heart.

"You forget," she began,

"That you menace yourself. You yourself are  
the man

That is guilty. Alas! must it ever be so?

Do we stand in our own light, wherever we go,  
And fight our own shadows forever. O think!  
The trial from which you, the stronger ones,  
shrink,

You ask woman, the weaker one, still to en-  
dure;

You bid her be true to the laws you abjure;  
To abide by the ties you yourselves rend asun-  
der,

With the force that has fail'd you; and that,  
 too, when under  
 The assumption of right which to her you re-  
 fuse,  
 The immunity claim'd for yourselves you abuse  
 Where the contract exists, it involves obliga-  
 tion  
 To both husband and wife, in an equal rela-  
 tion.  
 You unloose, in asserting your own liberty,  
 A knot, which, unloosed, leaves another as  
 free.  
 Then, O Alfred! be juster at heart: and thank  
 Heaven  
 That Heaven to your wife such a nature has  
 given  
 That you have not wherewith to reproach her,  
 albeit  
 You have cause to reproach your own self,  
 could you see it!"

## VI.

In the silence that follow'd the last word she  
 said,  
 In the heave of his chest, and the droop of his  
 head,  
 Poor Lucile mark'd her words had sufficed to  
 impart  
 A new germ of motion and life to that heart  
 Of which he himself had so recently spoken  
 As dead to emotion—exhausted or broken!  
 New fears would awaken new hopes in his life.  
 In the husband indifferent no more to the wife

She already, as she had foreseen, could discover

That Matilda had gain'd, at her hands a new lover.

So after some moments of silence, whose spell  
They both felt, she extended her hand to  
him . . .

## VII.

“Well?”

## VIII.

“Lucile,” he replied, as that soft quiet hand  
In his own he clasp'd warmly, “I both understand

And obey you.”

“Thank Heaven!” she murmur'd,

“O yet,

One word, I beseech you! I cannot forget,”  
He exclaim'd, “we are parting for life. You  
have shown

My pathway to me: but say, what is your  
own?”

The calmness with which until then she had  
spoken

In a moment seem'd strangely and suddenly  
broken,

She turn'd from him nervously, hurriedly.

“Nay,

I know not,” she murmur'd. “I follow the  
way

Heaven leads me; I cannot foresee to what  
end.

I know only that far, far away it must tend

From all places in which we have met, or might  
meet.

Far away!—onward—upward!"

A smile strange and sweet  
As the incense that rises from some sacred cup  
And mixes with music, stole forth, and  
breathed up

Her whole face, with those words.

"Wheresoever it be,  
May all gentlest angels attend you!" sighed he,  
"And bear my heart's blessing wherever you  
are!"

And her hand, with emotion, he kiss'd.

## IX.

From afar  
That kiss was, alas! by Matilda beheld  
With far other emotions: her young bosom  
swell'd  
And her young cheek with anger was crim-  
son'd.

The Duke  
Adroitly attracted towards it her look  
By a faint but significant smile.

## X.

Much ill-construed,  
Renown'd Bishop Berkley has fully, for one,  
strew'd  
With arguments, page upon page, to teach  
folks  
That the world they inhabit is only a hoax.  
But it surely is hard, since we can't do without  
them,

That our senses should make us so oft wish to  
doubt them!

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## CANTO III.

## I.

When first the red savage call'd Man strode, a  
king,  
Through the wilds of creation—the very first  
thing  
That his naked intelligence taught him to feel  
Was the shame of himself; and the wish to  
conceal  
Was the first step in art. From the apron  
which Eve  
In Eden sat down out of fig-leaves to weave  
To the furbelow'd flounce and the broad crin-  
oline  
Of my lady—you all know, of course, whom I  
mean—  
This art of concealment has greatly increas'd.  
A whole world lies cryptic in each human  
breast;  
And that drama of passions as old as the hills,  
Which the moral of all men in each man ful-  
fills  
Is only reveal'd now and then to our eyes  
In the newspaper-files and the courts of assize.

## II.

In the group seen so lately in sunlight assem-  
bled,

'Mid those walks over which the laburnum-  
 bough trembled,  
 And the deep-bosom'd lilac, emparadising  
 The haunts where the blackbird and thrush flit  
 and sing,  
 The keenest eye could but have seen, and seen  
 only,  
 A circle of friends, minded not to leave lonely  
 The bird on the bough, or the bee on the blos-  
 som;  
 Conversing at ease in the garden's green bosom  
 Like those who, when Florence was yet in her  
 glories,  
 Cheated death and kill'd time with Boccaccian  
 stories.  
 But at length the long twilight more deeply  
 grew shaded,  
 And the fair night the rosy horizon invaded,  
 And the bee in the blossom, the bird on the  
 bough,  
 Through the shadowy garden were slumbering  
 now,  
 The trees only, o'er every unvisited walk,  
 Began on a sudden to whisper and talk.  
 And as each little sprightly and garrulous leaf  
 Woke up with an evident sense of relief,  
 They all seem'd to be saying . . . "Once more  
 we're alone,  
 And, thank Heaven, those tiresome people are  
 gone!"

## III.

Through the deep blue concave of the luminous  
 air,



Large, loving, and languid, the stars here and  
there,  
Like the eyes of shy, passionate women, look'd  
down  
O'er the dim world whose sole tender light  
was their own,  
When Matilda, alone, from her chamber de-  
scended,  
And enter'd the garden, unseen, unattended.  
Her forehead was aching and parch'd, and her  
breast  
By a vague inexpressible sadness oppress'd:  
A sadness which led her, she scarcely knew  
how,  
And she scarcely knew why . . . (save, in-  
deed, that just now  
The house, out of which with a gasp she had  
fled  
Half-stifled, seem'd ready to sink on her  
head) . . .  
Out into the night air, the silence, the bright  
Boundless starlight, the cool isolation of night!  
Her husband that day had look'd once in her  
face,  
And press'd both her hands in a silent embrace,  
And reproachfully noticed her recent dejection  
With a smile of kind wonder and tacit affec-  
tion.  
He, of late so indifferent and listless! . . . at  
last  
Was he startled and awed by the change which  
had pass'd  
O'er the once radiant face of his young wife?  
Whence came

That long look of solicitous fondness? . . . the  
same

Look and language of quiet affection—the look  
And the language, alas! which so often she  
took

For pure love in the simple repose of its pur-  
ity—

Her own heart thus lull'd to a fatal security!  
Ha! would he deceive her again by this kind-  
ness?

Had she been, then, O fool! in her innocent  
blindness

The sport of transparent illusion? ah folly!  
And that feeling, so tranquil, so happy, so holy,  
She had taken, till then, in the heart, not alone  
Of her husband, but also, indeed, in her own,  
For true love, nothing else, after all, did it  
prove

But a friendship profanely familiar?

“And love? . . .

What was love, then? . . . not calm, not secure  
—scarcely kind

But in one, all intensest emotions combined:  
Life and death: pain and rapture.”

Thus wandering astray,  
Led by doubt, through the darkness she wan-  
der'd away.

All silently crossing, recrossing the night,  
With faint, meteoric, miraculous light,  
The swift shooting stars through the infinite  
burn'd

And into the infinite ever return'd.

And silently o'er the obscure and unknown  
In the heart of Matilda there darted and shone

Thoughts, enkindling like meteors the deeps,  
to expire,  
Leaving traces behind them of tremulous fire.

## IV.

She enter'd that arbor of lilacs, in which  
The dark air with odors hung heavy and rich,  
Like a soul that grows faint with desire.  
'Twas the place  
In which she so lately had sat, face to face  
With her husband,—and her, the pale stranger  
detested,  
Whose presence her heart like a plague had  
infested.  
The whole spot with evil remembrance was  
haunted.  
Through the darkness there rose on the heart  
which it daunted  
Each dreary detail of that desolate day,  
So full, and yet so incomplete. Far away  
The acacias were muttering, like mischievous  
elves  
The whole story over again to themselves,  
Each word,—and each word was a wound!  
By degrees  
Her memory mingled its voice with the trees.

## V.

Like the whisper Eve heard, when she paused  
by the root  
Of the sad tree of knowledge, and gazed on its  
fruit,  
To the heart of Matilda the trees seem'd to hiss

Wild instructions, revealing man's last right,  
 which is  
 The right of reprisals.

An image uncertain,  
 And vague, dimly shaped itself forth on the  
 curtain  
 Of the darkness around her. It came, and it  
 went;  
 Through her senses a faint sense of peril it sent:  
 It pass'd and repass'd her; it went and it came  
 Forever returning; forever the same;  
 And forever more clearly defined; till her eyes  
 In that outline obscure could at last recognize  
 The man to whose image the more and the more  
 That her heart, now aroused from its calm  
 sleep of yore,  
 From her husband detach'd itself slowly, with  
 pain,  
 Her thoughts had return'd and return'd to,  
 again,  
 As though by some secret indefinite law,—  
 The vigilant Frenchman—Eugene de Luvois!

## VI.

A light sound behind her. She trembled. By  
 some  
 Night-witchcraft her vision a face had become.  
 On a sudden she felt, without turning to view,  
 That a man was approaching behind her. She  
 knew  
 By the fluttering pulse which she could not  
 restrain,  
 And the quick-beating heart, that this man  
 was Eugene.

Her first instinct was flight; but she felt her  
 slight foot  
 As heavy as though to the soil it had root.  
 And the Duke's voice retain'd her, like fear  
 in a dream,

## VII.

“Ah, lady! in life there are meetings which  
 seem

Like a fate. Dare I think like a sympathy too?  
 Yet what else can I bless for this vision of you?  
 Alone with my thoughts, on this starlighted  
 lawn,

By an instinct resistless, I felt myself drawn  
 To revisit the memories left in that place  
 Where so lately this evening I look'd in your  
 face.

And I find,—you, yourself—my own dream!

“Can there be  
 In this world one thought common to you and  
 to me?

If so, . . . I, who deem'd but a moment ago  
 My heart uncompanion'd, save only by woe,  
 Should indeed be more bless'd than I dare to  
 believe—

—Ah, but one word, but one from your lips to  
 receive” . . .

Interrupting him quickly, she murmur'd, “I  
 sought,

Here, a moment of solitude, silence, and  
 thought.

Which I needed.” . . .

“Lives solitude only for one?

Must its charm by my presence so soon be  
undone?

Ah, cannot two share it? What needs it for  
this?—

The same thought in both hearts,—be it sorrow  
or bliss;

If my heart be the reflex of yours, lady—you,  
Are you not yet alone,—even though we be  
two?"

"For that," . . . said Matilda, . . . "needs  
were, you should read  
What I have in my heart" . . .

"Think you, lady, indeed,  
You are yet of that age when a woman conceals  
In her heart so completely whatever she feels  
From the heart of the man whom it interests  
to know

And find out what that feeling may be? Ah,  
not so,

Lady Alfred! Forgive me that in it I look,  
But I read in your heart as I read in a book."

"Well, Duke! and what read you within it?  
unless

It be, of a truth, a profound weariness,  
And some sadness?"

"No doubt. To all facts there are laws.  
The effect has its cause, and I mount to the  
cause."

#### VIII.

Matilda shrank back; for she suddenly found  
That a finger was press'd on the yet bleeding  
wound

She, herself, had but that day perceived in her breast.

“You are sad,” . . . said the Duke (and that finger yet press’d

With a cruel persistence the wound it made bleed)—

You are sad, Lady Alfred, because the first need

Of a young and a beautiful woman is to be Beloved, and to love. You are sad; for you see That you are not beloved, as you deem’d that you were:

You are sad: for that knowledge hath left you aware

That you have not yet loved, though you thought that you had,

Yes, yes! . . . you are sad—because knowledge is sad!”

He could not have read more profoundly her heart.

“What gave you,” she cried, with a terrified start

“Such strange power!” . . .

“To read in your thoughts?” he exclaim’d,  
“O lady,—a love, deep, profound—be it blamed  
Or rejected,—a love, true, intense—such, at least,

As you, and you only, could wake in my breast!”

“Hush, hush! . . . I beseech you . . . for pity!” she gasp’d,

Snatching hurriedly from him the hand he had clasp’d

In her effort instinctive to fly from the spot.

"For pity?" . . . he echoed, "for pity! and  
 what  
 Is the pity you owe him? his pity for you!  
 He, the lord of a life, fresh as new-fallen dew!  
 The guardian and guide of a woman, young,  
 fair,  
 And matchless! (whose happiness did he not  
 swear  
 To cherish through life?) he neglects her—for  
 whom?  
 For a fairer than she? No! the rose in the  
 bloom  
 Of that beauty which, even when hidd'n, can  
 prevail  
 To keep sleepless with song the aroused night-  
 ingale,  
 Is not fairer; for even in the pure world of  
 flowers  
 Her symbol is not, and this pure world of  
 ours  
 Has no second Matilda! For whom? Let  
 that pass!  
 'Tis not I, 'tis not you, that can name her,  
 alas!  
 And I dare not question or judge her. But  
 why,  
 Why cherish the cause of your own misery?  
 Why think of one, lady, who thinks not of you?  
 Why be bound by a chain which himself he  
 breaks through?  
 And why, since you have but to stretch forth  
 your hand,  
 The love which you need and deserve to com-  
 mand,



Why shrink? Why repel it?"

"O hush, sir! O hush!"

Cried Matilda, as though her whole heart were  
one blush.

"Cease, cease, I conjure you, to trouble my  
life!

Is not Alfred your friend? and am I not his  
wife?"

## IX.

"And have I not, lady," he answer'd . . .

"respected

His rights as a friend till himself he neglected  
Your rights as a wife? Do you think 'tis alone  
For three days I have loved you? My love  
may have grown,

I admit, day by day, since I first felt your eyes,  
In watching their tears, and in sounding your  
sighs.

But, O lady! I loved you before I believed  
That your eyes ever wept, or your heart ever  
grieved.

Then I deem'd you were happy—I deem'd you  
possess'd

All the love you deserved,—and I hid in my  
breast

My own love, till this hour—when I could not  
but feel

Your grief gave me the right my own grief to  
reveal!

I knew, years ago, of the singular power  
Which Lucile o'er your husband possess'd.

Till the hour

In which he reveal'd it himself, did I,—say!—

By a word or a look, such a secret betray?  
 No! no! do me justice. I never have spoken  
 Of this poor heart of mine, till all ties he had  
 broken

Which bound your heart to him. And now—  
 now, that this love

For another hath left your own heart free to  
 rove,

What is it,—even now,—that I kneel to im-  
 plore you?

Only this, Lady Alfred! . . . to let me adore  
 you

Unblamed: to have confidence in me: to  
 spend

On me not one thought, save to think me your  
 friend.

Let me speak to you,—ah, let me speak to you  
 still!

Hush to silence my words in your heart, if you  
 will.

I ask no response: I ask only your leave  
 To live yet in your life, and to grieve when you  
 grieve!"

## x.

"Leave me, leave me!" . . . she gasp'd, with  
 a voice thick and low

From emotion. "For pity's sake, Duke, let me  
 go!

I feel that to blame we should both of us be,  
 Did I linger."

"To blame? yes, no doubt!" . . . answer'd  
 he,

“If the love of your husband, in bringing you  
 peace,  
 Had forbidden you hope. But he signs your  
 release

By the hand of another. One moment! but  
 one!

Who knows when, alas! I may see you alone  
 As to-night I have seen you? or when we may  
 meet

As to-night we have met? when, entranced at  
 your feet,

As in this blessed hour, I may ever avow  
 The thoughts which are pining for utterance  
 now?”

“Duke! Duke!” . . . she exclaim’d . . . “for  
 heaven’s sake let me go!

It is late. In the house they will miss me, I  
 know.

We must not be seen here together. The night  
 Is advancing. I feel overwhelm’d with affright!  
 It is time to return to my lord.”

“To your lord?”

He repeated, with lingering reproach on the  
 word.

“To your lord? do you think he awaits you  
 in truth?

Is he anxiously missing your presence, for-  
 sooth?

Return to your lord! . . . his restraint to  
 renew?

And hinder the glances which are not for you?  
 No, no! . . . at this moment his looks seek the  
 face

Of another! another is there in your place!

Another consoles him! another receives  
The soft speech which from silence your  
absence relieves!"

## XI.

"You mistake, sir!" . . . responded a voice,  
calm, severe,  
And sad. . . . "You mistake, sir! that other is  
here."

Eugene and Matilda both started.

"Lucile!"

With a half-stifled scream, as she felt herself  
reel

From the place where she stood, cried Matilda.

"Ho, oh!

What! eavesdropping, madam?" . . . the Duke  
cried . . . "And so

You were listening?"

"Say: rather," she said, "that I heard,  
Without wishing to hear it, that infamous  
word,—

Heard—and therefore reply."

"Belle Comtesse," said the Duke,  
With concentrated wrath in the savage rebuke,  
Which betray'd that he felt himself baffled . . .

"you know

That your place is not here."

"Duke," she answered him slow,  
"My place is where my duty is clear:  
And therefore my place, at this moment, is  
here.

O lady, this morning my place was beside  
Your husband because (as she said this she  
sigh'd)

I felt that from folly fast growing to crime—  
The crime of self-blindness — Heaven yet  
spared me time.

To save for the love of an innocent wife  
All that such love deserved in the heart and  
the life

Of the man to whose heart and whose life you  
alone

Can with safety confide the pure trust of your  
own.”

She turn'd to Matilda, and lightly laid on her  
Her soft quiet hand . . .

“ 'Tis, O lady, the honor  
Which that man has confided to you, that, in  
spite

Of his friend, I now trust I may yet save  
to-night—

Save for both of you' for yours I revere;  
Duc de Luvois, what say you?—my place is not  
here?”

## XII.

And, so saying, the hand of Matilda she  
caught,

Wound one arm round her waist unresisted  
and sought

Gently, softly, to draw her away from the spot.  
The Duke stood confounded, and follow'd  
them not

But not yet the house had they reach'd when  
Lucile

Her tender and delicate burden could feel  
Sink and falter beside her. Oh, then she  
knelt down,

Flung her arms round Matilda, and press'd to  
her own

The poor bosom beating against her.

The moon,  
Bright, breathless, and buoyant, and brimful  
of June,

Floated up from the hillside, sloped over the  
vale,

And poised himself loose in mid-heaven, with  
one pale,

Minute, scintillessent, and tremulous star  
Swinging under her globe like a wizard-lit car,  
Thus to each of those women revealing the  
face

Of the other. Each bore on her features the  
trace

Of a vivid emotion. A deep inward shame  
The cheek of Matilda had flooded with flame.  
With her enthusiastic emotion, Lucile  
Trembled visibly yet; for she could not but  
feel

That a heavenly hand was upon her that night,  
And it touch'd her pure brow to a heavenly  
light.

“In the name of your husband, dear lady,”  
she said;

“In the name of your mother, take heart! Lift  
your head,

For those blushes are noble. Alas! do not trust  
To that maxim of virtue made ashes and dust,  
That the fault of the husband can cancel the  
wife's.

Take heart! and take refuge and strength in  
your life's

Pure silence,—there, kneel, pray, and hope,  
weep, and wait!”

“Saved, Lucile!” sobb’d Matilda, “but saved  
to what fate?

Tears, prayers, yes! not hopes.”

“Hush!” the sweet voice replied.

“Fool’d away by a fancy, again to your side  
Must your husband return. Doubt not this.  
And return

For the love you can give, with the love that  
you yearn

To receive, lady. What was it chill’d you  
both now?

Not the absence of love, but the ignorance how  
Love is nourish’d by love. Well! henceforth  
you will prove

Your heart worthy of love,—since it knows how  
to love.”

## XIII.

“What gives you such power over me, that I  
feel

Thus drawn to obey you? What are you, Lu-  
cile?”

Sigh’d Matilda, and lifted her eyes to the face  
Of Lucile.

There pass’d suddenly through it the trace  
Of deep sadness; and o’er that fair forehead  
came down

A shadow which yet was too sweet for a frown.

“The pupil of sorrow, perchance” . . . she  
replied.

“Of sorrow?” Matilda exclaim’d . . . “O con-  
fide

To my heart your affliction. In all you made  
 known  
 I should find some instruction, no doubt, for  
 my own!"

"And I some consolation, no doubt; for the  
 tears  
 Of another have not flow'd for me many  
 years."

It was then that Matilda herself seized the hand  
 Of Lucile in her own, and uplifted her; and  
 Thus together they enter'd the house.

## XIV.

'Twas the room  
 Of Matilda.

The languid and delicate gloom  
 Of a lamp of pure white alabaster, aloft  
 From the ceiling suspended, around it slept  
 soft.

The casement oped into the garden. The pale  
 Cool moonlight stream'd through it. One lone  
 nightingale sung aloof in the laurels.

And here, side by side,  
 Hand in hand, the two women sat down unde-  
 scribed  
 Save by guardian angels.

As, when, sparkling yet  
 From the rain, that, with drops that are jewels,  
 leaves wet  
 The bright head it humbles, a young rose in-  
 clines  
 To some pale lily near it, the fair vision shines  
 As one flower with two faces, in hush'd tearful  
 speech,



Like the showery whispers of flowers, each to  
     each  
 Link'd, and leaning together, so loving, so  
     fair,  
 So united, yet diverse, the two women there  
 Look'd, indeed, like two flowers upon one  
     drooping stem,  
 In the soft light that tenderly rested on them.  
 All that soul said to soul in that chamber, who  
     knows?  
 All that heart gain'd from heart?  
                                     Leave the lily, the rose,  
 Undisturb'd with their secret within them.  
     For who  
 To the heart of the flowret can follow the dew?  
 A night full of stars! O'er the silence, unseen,  
 The footsteps of sentinel angels, between  
 The dark land and deep sky were moving.  
     You heard  
 Pass'd from earth up to heaven the happy  
     watchword  
 Which brighten'd the stars as amongst them it  
     fell  
 From earth's heart, which it eased. . . . "All  
     is well! all is well!"

---

## CANTO IV.

### I.

The Poets pour wine; and, when 'tis new, all  
     decry it;  
 But, once let it be old, every trifler must try it.

And Polonius, who praises no wine that's not  
Massic,  
Complains of my verse, that my verse is not  
classic.

And Miss Tilburina, who sings, and not badly,  
My earlier verses, sighs "Commonplace sadly!"  
As for you, O Polonius, you vex me but  
slightly;

But you, Tilburina, your eyes beam so brightly  
In despite of their languishing looks, on my  
word,

That to see you look cross I can scarcely afford.  
Yes! the silliest woman that smiles on a bard  
Better far than Longinus himself can reward  
The appeal to her feelings of which she ap-  
proves;

And the critics I most care to please are the  
Loves.

Alas, friend! what boots it, a stone at his head  
And a brass on his breast,—when a man is  
once dead?

Ay! were fame the sole guerdon, poor guerdon  
were then

Theirs who, stripping life bare, stand forth  
models for men.

The reformer's?—a creed by posterity learnt  
A century after its author is burnt!

The poet's?—a laurel that hides the bald  
brow

It hath blighted! The painter's?—ask Raphael  
now

Which Madonna's authentic! The states-  
man's?—a name

For parties to blacken, or boys to declaim!

The soldier's?—three lines on the cold Abbey  
pavement!  
Were this all the life of the wise and the brave  
meant,  
All it ends in, thrice better, Neæra, it were  
Unregarded to sport with thine odorous hair,  
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the shade  
And be loved, while the roses yet bloom over-  
head,  
Than to sit by the lone hearth, and think the  
long thought,  
A severe, sad, blind schoolmaster, envied for  
naught  
Save the name of John Milton! For all men,  
indeed,  
Who in some choice edition may graciously  
read,  
With fair illustration, and erudite note,  
The song which the poet in bitterness wrote,  
Beat the poet, and notably beat him, in this—  
The joy of the genius is theirs, whilst they miss  
The grief of the man: Tasso's song—not his  
madness!  
Dante's dreams—not his waking to exile and  
sadness!  
Milton's music — but not Milton's blind-  
ness! . . .

Yet rise,  
My Milton, and answer, with those noble eyes  
Which the glory of heaven hath blinded to  
earth!  
Say—the life, in the living it, savors of worth:  
That the deed, in the doing it, reaches its aim:  
That the fact has a value apart from the fame:

That a deeper delight, in the mere labor, pays  
 Scorn of lesser delights, and laborious days:  
 And Shakespeare, though all Shakespeare's  
     writings were lost,  
 And his genius, though never a trace of it  
     crossed  
 Posterity's path, not the less would have dwelt  
 In the isle with Miranda, with Hamlet have  
     felt  
 All that Hamlet hath uttered, and haply where,  
     pure  
 On its death-bed, wrong'd Love lay, have  
     moan'd with the Moor!

## II.

When Lord Alfred that night to the salon re-  
     turn'd  
 He found it deserted. The lamp dimly burn'd  
 As though half out of humor to find itself there  
 Forced to light for no purpose a room that was  
     bare.  
 He sat down by the window alone. Never yet  
 Did the heavens of lovelier evening beget  
 Since Latona's bright childbed that bore the  
     new moon!  
 The dark world lay still, in a sort of sweet  
     swoon,  
 Wide open to heaven; and the stars on the  
     stream  
 Were trembling like eyes that are loved on the  
     dream  
 Of a lover; and all things were glad and at rest  
 Save the unquiet heart in his own troubled  
     breast.

He endeavor'd to think—an unwonted employ-  
ment,  
Which appear'd to afford him no sort of enjoy-  
ment.

## III.

“Withdraw into yourself. But, if peace you  
seek there for,  
Your reception, beforehand, be sure to prepare  
for,”

Wrote the tutor of Nero; who wrote, be it said,  
Better far than he acted—but peace to the  
dead!

He bled for his pupil: what more could he do?  
But Lord Alfred, when into himself he with-  
drew,

Found all there in disorder. For more than an  
hour

He sat with his head droop'd like some stub-  
born flower

Beaten down by the rush of the rain—with  
such force

Did the thick, gushing thoughts hold upon him  
the course

Of their sudden descent, rapid, rushing, and  
dim,

From the cloud that had darken'd the evening  
for him.

At one moment he rose—rose and open'd the  
door,

And wistfully look'd down the dark corridor  
Toward the room of Matilda. Anon, with a  
sigh

Of an incomplete purpose, he crept quietly

Back again to his place in a sort of submission  
 To doubt, and return'd to his former position,—  
 That loose fall of the arms, that dull droop of  
     the face,  
 And the eye vaguely fix'd on impalpable space.  
 The dream, which till then had been lulling his  
     life,  
 As once Circe the winds, had seal'd thought;  
     and his wife  
 And his home for a time he had quite, like  
     Ulysses,  
 Forgotten; but now o'er the troubled Abysses  
 Of the spirit within him, æolian, forth leapt  
 To their freedom new-found, and resistlessly  
     swept  
 All his heart into tumult, the thoughts which  
     had been  
 Long pent up in their mystic recesses unseen.

## IV.

How long he thus sat there, himself he knew  
     not.  
 Till he started, as though he were suddenly  
     shot,  
 To the sound of a voice too familiar to doubt,  
 Which was making some noise in the passage  
     without,  
 A sound English voice, with a round English  
     accent,  
 Which the scared German echoes resentfully  
     back sent;  
 The complaint of a much disappointed cab-  
     driver

Mingled with it, demanding some ultimate  
stiver;  
Then, the heavy and hurried approach of a  
boot  
Which reveal'd by its sound no diminutive foot  
And the door was flung suddenly open, and on  
The threshold Lord Alfred by bachelor John  
Was seized in that sort of affectionate rage or  
Frenzy of hugs which some stout Ursa Major  
On some lean Ursa Minor would doubtless be-  
stow  
With a warmth for which only starvation and  
snow  
Could render one grateful. As soon as he  
could,  
Lord Alfred contrived to escape, nor be food  
Any more for those somewhat voracious em-  
braces.  
Then the two men sat down and scann'd each  
other's faces;  
And Alfred could see that his cousin was taken  
With unwonted emotion. The hand that had  
shaken  
His own trembled somewhat. In truth he de-  
scried,  
At a glance, something wrong.

v.

“What’s the matter?” he cried.  
“What have you to tell me?”

JOHN.

What! have you not heard?

LUCILE.

ALFRED.

Heard what?

JOHN.

This sad business—

ALFRED.

I? no, not a word.

JOHN.

You received my last letter?

ALFRED.

I think so. If not,

What then?

JOHN.

You have acted upon it?

ALFRED.

On what?

JOHN.

The advice that I gave you—

ALFRED.

Advice?—let me see?

You always are giving advice, Jack, to me.  
About Parliament was it?

JOHN.

Hang Parliament! no.

The Bank, the Bank, Alfred!

ALFRED.

What Bank?



JOHN.

Heavens! I know  
 You are careless;—but surely you have not for-  
 gotten,—  
 Or neglected . . . I warn'd you the whole  
 thing was rotten.  
 You have drawn those deposits at least?

ALFRED.

No, I meant  
 To have written to-day; but the note shall be  
 sent  
 To-morrow, however.

JOHN.

To-morrow? too late!  
 Too late! oh, what devil bewitch'd you to wait?

ALFRED.

Mercy save us! you don't mean to say . . .

JOHN.

Yes, I do.

ALFRED.

What! Sir Ridley? . . .

JOHN.

Smash'd, broken, blown up, bolte'd, too!

ALFRED.

But his own niece? . . . In heaven's name,  
 Jack. . . .

JOHN.

Oh, I told you  
 The old hypocritical scoundrel would . . .

ALFRED.

Hold! you

Surely can't mean we are ruin'd?

JOHN.

Sit down!

A fortnight ago a report about town  
 Made me most apprehensive. Alas, and alas!  
 I at once wrote and warn'd you. Well, now  
 let that pass.

A run on the Bank about five days ago  
 Confirm'd my forebodings too terribly, though.  
 I drove down to the city at once; found the  
 door

Of the Bank closed; the Bank had stopp'd pay-  
 ment at four.

Next morning the failure was known to be  
 fraud;

Warrant out for McNab; but McNab was  
 abroad:

Gone—we cannot tell where. I endeavor'd to  
 get

Information: have learn'd nothing certain as  
 yet—

Not even the way that old Ridley was gone:  
 Or with those securities what he had done:  
 Or whether they had been already call'd out:  
 If they are not, their fate is, I fear, past a  
 doubt.

Twenty families ruin'd, they say: what was  
 left,—

Unable to find any clew to the cleft  
 The old fox ran to earth in,—but join you as  
 fast

As I could, my dear Alfred?\*

## IV.

He stopp'd here, aghast  
 At the change in his cousin, the hue of whose  
 face  
 Had grown livid; and glassy his eyes fix'd on  
 space.  
 "Courage, courage!" . . . said John, . . .  
 "bear the blow like a man!"  
 And he caught the cold hand of Lord Alfred.  
 There ran  
 Through that hand a quick tremor. "I bear  
 it," he said,  
 "But Matilda? the blow is to her!" And his  
 head  
 Seem'd forced down, as he said it.

## JOHN.

Matilda? Pooh, pooh!  
 I half think I know the girl better than you.  
 She has courage enough—and to spare. She  
 cares less  
 Than most women for luxury, nonsense, and  
 dress.

## ALFRED.

The fault has been mine.

---

\*These events, it is needless to say, Mr. Morse,  
 Took place when Bad News as yet travel'd by horse;  
 Ere the world, like a cockchafer, buzz'd on a wire,  
 Or Time was calcined by electrical fire;  
 Ere a cable went under the hoary Atlantic,  
 Or the word Telegram drove grammarians frantic.

JOHN.

Be it yours to repair it:  
If you did not avert, you may help her to bear  
it.

ALFRED.

I might have averted.

JOHN.

Perhaps so. But now  
There is clearly no use in considering how,  
Or whence, came the mischief. The mischief  
is here.

Broken shins are not mended by crying—that's  
clear!

One has but to rub them and get up again,  
And push on—and not think too much of the  
pain.

And at least it is much that you see that to her  
You owe too much to think of yourself. You  
must stir

And arouse yourself, Alfred, for her sake. Who  
knows?

Something yet may be saved from this wreck.

I suppose

We shall make him disgorge all he can, at the  
least.

“O Jack, I have been a brute idiot! a beast!  
A fool! I have sinn'd, and to her I have  
sinn'd!

I have been heedless, blind, inexcusably blind!  
And now, in a flash, I see all things!”

As though  
To shut out the vision, he bow'd his head low



“Knew not her husband stood watching.”—Page 295.

Lucile.



On his hands; and the great tears in silence  
 roll'd on,  
 And fell momentarily, heavily, one after one.  
 John felt no desire to find instant relief  
 For the trouble he witness'd.

He guess'd, in the grief  
 Of his cousin, the broken and heartfelt admis-  
 sion  
 Of some error demanding a heartfelt contri-  
 tion:  
 Some oblivion perchance which could plead  
 less excuse  
 To the heart of a man re-aroused to the use  
 Of the conscience God gave him, than simply  
 and merely  
 The neglect for which now he was paying so  
 dearly.  
 So he rose without speaking, and paced up and  
 down  
 The long room, much afflicted, indeed, in his  
 own  
 Cordial heart for Matilda.

Thus, silently lost  
 In his anxious reflection, he cross'd and re-  
 cross'd  
 The place where his cousin yet hopelessly hung  
 O'er the table; his fingers entwisted among  
 The rich curls they were knotting and drag-  
 ging: and there,  
 That sound of all sounds the most painful to  
 hear,  
 The sobs of a man! Yet so far in his own  
 Kindly thoughts was he plunged, he already  
 had grown

Unconscious of Alfred.

And so for a space  
There was silence between them.

VII.

At last, with sad face  
He stopp'd short, and bent on his cousin awhile  
A pain'd sort of wistful, compassionate smile,  
Approach'd him—stood o'er him,—and sud-  
denly laid

One hand on his shoulder—

“Where is she?” he said.

Alfred lifted his face all disfigured with tears  
And gazed vacantly at him, like one that ap-  
pears

In some foreign language to hear himself  
greeted,

Unable to answer.

“Where is she?” repeated

His cousin.

He motion'd his hand to the door;  
“There, I think,” he replied. Cousin John  
said no more,

And appear'd to relapse to his own cogitations,  
Of which not a gesture vouchsafed indica-  
tions.

So again there was silence.

A timepiece at last  
Struck the twelve strokes of midnight.

Roused by them, he cast  
A half-look to the dial; then quietly threw  
His arm round the neck of his cousin, and drew  
The hands down from his face.

“It is time she should know



What has happen'd," he said, . . . "let us go  
to her now.'

Alfred started at once to his feet.

Drawn and wan  
Though his face, he look'd more than his wont  
was—a man.

Strong for once, in his weakness. Uplifted,  
fill'd through

With a manly resolve.

If that axiom be true  
Of the "*Sum quia cogito*," I must opine

That "*id sum quod cogito*:"—that which, in  
fine,

A man thinks and feels, with his whole force  
of thought

And feeling, the man is himself.

He had fought  
With himself, and rose up from his self-over-  
throw

The survivor of much which that strife had laid  
low.

At his feet, as he rose at the name of his wife,  
Lay in ruins the brilliant unrealized life

Which, though yet unfulfill'd, seem'd till then,  
in that name,

To be his, had he claim'd it. The man's dream  
of fame

And of power fell shatter'd before him; and  
only

There rested the heart of the woman, so lonely  
In all save the love he could give her. The  
lord

Of that heart he arose. Blush not, Muse, to  
record

That his first thought, and last, at that moment  
was not

Of the power and fame that seem'd lost to his  
lot.

But the love that was left to it; not of the self  
He had cared for, yet squander'd; and not of  
himself,

But of her; as he murmur'd,

"One moment, dear Jack!

We have grown up from boyhood together.

Our track

Has been through the same meadows in child-  
hood: in youth

Through the same silent gateways, to manhood.

In truth,

There is none that can know me as you do;  
and none

To whom I more wish to believe myself known.

Speak the truth; you are not wont to mince it,  
I know.

Nor I, shall I shirk it, or shrink from it now.

In despite of a wanton behavior, in spite

Of vanity, folly, and pride, Jack, which might

Have turn'd from me many a heart strong and  
true

As your own, I have never turn'd round and  
miss'd YOU

From my side in one hour of affliction or doubt

By my own blind and heedless self-will brought  
about.

Tell me truth. Do I owe this alone to the sake

Of those old recollections of boyhood that make

In your heart yet some clinging and crying  
appeal

From a judgment more harsh, which I cannot  
but feel  
Might have sentenced our friendship to death  
long ago?  
Or is it . . . (I would I could deem it were so!)  
That, not all overlaid by a listless exterior,  
Your heart has divined in me something  
superior  
To that which I seem; from my innermost  
nature  
Not wholly expell'd by the world's usurpature?  
Some instinct of earnestness, truth or desire  
For truth? Some one spark of the soul's native  
fire  
Moving under the ashes, and cinders, and dust  
Which life hath heap'd o'er it? Some one fact  
to trust  
And to hope in? Or by you alone am I deem'd  
The mere frivolous fool I so often have seem'd  
To my own self?"

JOHN.

No, Alfred! you will, I believe,  
Be true, at the last, to what now makes you  
grieve  
For having belied your true nature so long  
Necessity is a stern teacher. Be strong!

'Do you think,' he resumed . . . "what I  
feel while I speak  
Is no more than a transient emotion, as weak  
As these weak tears would seem to betoken it?"

JOHN.

No.

ALFRED.

Thank you, cousin! your hand then. And  
 now I will go  
 Alone, Jack. Trust to me.

VIII.

JOHN.

I do. But 'tis late  
 If she sleeps, you'll not wake her?

ALFRED.

No, no! it will wait  
 (Poor infant) too surely, this mission of sorrow,  
 If she sleeps, I will not mar her dreams of  
 to-morrow.

He open'd the door, and pass'd out.

Cousin John  
 Watch'd him wistful, and left him to seek her  
 alone.

His heart beat so loud when he knock'd at her  
 door,

He could hear no reply from within. Yet once  
 more

He knock'd lightly. No answer. The handle  
 he tried:

The door open'd: he enter'd the room unde-  
 scribed.

X.

No brighter than is that dim circlet of light  
 Which enhaloes the moon when rains form on  
 the night,

The pale lamp an indistinct radiance shed  
Round the chamber, in which, at her pure  
snowy bed  
Matilda was kneeling; so wrapt in deep prayer  
That she knew not her husband stood watch-  
ing her there.  
With the lamplight the moonlight had mingled  
a faint  
And unearthly effulgence which seem'd to  
acquaint  
The whole place with a sense of deep peace  
made secure  
By the presence of something angelic and pure.  
And not purer some angel Grief carves o'er  
the tomb  
Where love lies, than the lady that kneel'd in  
that gloom.  
She had put off her dress; and she look'd to  
his eyes  
Like a young soul escaped from its earthly dis-  
guise;  
Her fair neck and innocent shoulders were  
bare,  
And over them rippled her soft golden hair;  
Her simple and slender white bodice unlaced  
Confined not one curve of her delicate waist.  
As the light that, from water reflected, forever  
Trembles up through the tremulous reeds of a  
river,  
So the beam of her beauty went trembling in  
him,  
Through the thoughts it suffused with a sense  
soft and dim.  
Reproducing itself in the broken and bright



In its pressure on his, as the effort within it  
Lived and died with each tender tumultuous  
minute.

“O Alfred, O Alfred! forgive me, she cried  
—“Forgive me!”

“Forgive you, my poor child!” he sigh’d;  
“But I never have blamed you for aught that  
I know,  
And I have not one thought that reproaches  
you now.”

From her arms he unwound himself gently.  
And so

He forced her down softly beside him. Below  
The canopy shading their couch, they sat down.  
And he said, clasping firmly her hand in his  
own,

“When a proud man, Matilda, has found out  
at length,

That he is but a child in the midst of his  
strength,

But a fool in his wisdom, to whom can he own  
The weakness which thus to himself hath been  
shown?

From whom seek the strength which his need  
of is sore,

Although in his pride he might perish, before  
He could plead for the one, or the other avow  
'Mid his intimate friends? Wife of mine, tell  
me now,

Do you join me in feeling, in that darken'd  
hour,

The sole friend that can have the right or the  
power

To be at his side, is the woman that shares

His fate, if he falter; the woman that bears  
The name dear for her sake, and hallows the  
life

She has mingled her own with,—in short, that  
man's wife?"

"Yes," murmur'd Matilda, "O yes!"

"Then," he cried,

"This chamber in which we two sit, side by side  
(And his arm, as he spoke, seem'd more softly  
to press her),

Is now a confessional—you, my confessor!"

"I?" she falter'd, and timidly lifted her head.

"Yes! but first answer one other question," he  
said:

"When a woman once feels that she is not  
alone:

That the heart of another is warm'd by her  
own

That another feels with her whatever she feel,  
And halves her existence in woe or in weal;

That a man for her sake, well, so long as  
he lives;

Lives to put forth his strength which the  
thought of her gives;

Live to shield her from want, and to share with  
her sorrow;

Live to solace the day, and provide for the  
morrow:

Will that woman feel less than another, O say,  
The loss of what life, sparing this, takes away?  
Will she feel (feeling this), when calamities  
come,

That they brighten the heart, though they  
darken the home?"



She turn'd, like a soft rainy heav'n, on him  
 Eyes that smiled through fresh tears, trustful,  
 tender, and dim.

"That woman," she murmur'd, "indeed, were  
 thrice blest!"

"Then, courage, true wife of my heart!" to his  
 breast

As he folded and gather'd her closely, he cried,  
 "For the refuge, to-night in these arms open'd  
 wide

To your heart, can be never closed to it again,  
 And this room is for both an asylum! For  
 when

I pass'd through that door, at the door I left  
 there

A calamity sudden and heavy to bear.

One step from that threshold, and daily, I fear,  
 We must face it henceforth; but it enters not  
 here,

For that door shuts it out, and admits here  
 alone

A heart which calamity leaves all your own!"

She started . . . "Calamity, Alfred, to you?"

"To both, my poor child, but 'twill bring with  
 it too

The courage, I trust, to subdue it."

"O speak!

Speak!" she falter'd in tones timid, anxious,  
 and weak.

"O yet for a moment," he said, "hear me on!  
 Matilda, this morn we went forth in the sun,  
 Like those children of sunshine, the bright  
 summer flies,

That sport in the sunbeam, and play through  
 the skies  
 While the skies smile, and heed not each other;  
 at last,  
 When their sunbeam is gone, and their sky  
 overcast,  
 Who recks in what ruin they fold their wet  
 wings?  
 So, indeed, the morn found us,—poor frivolous  
 things!  
 Now our sky is o'ercast, and our sunbeam is  
 set,  
 And the night brings its darkness around us.  
 Oh, yet  
 Have we weather'd no storm through those  
 twelve cloudless hours?  
 Yes; you, too, have wept!  
 “While the world was yet ours,  
 While its sun was upon us, its incense stream'd  
 to us,  
 And its myriad voices of joy seem'd to woo us,  
 We stray'd from each other, too far, it may  
 be,  
 Nor, wantonly wandering, then did I see  
 How deep was my need of thee, dearest, how  
 great  
 Was thy claim on my heart and thy share in  
 my fate!  
 But, Matilda, an angel was near us, mean-  
 while,  
 Watching o'er us to warn, and to rescue!  
 “That smile  
 Which you saw with suspicion, that presence  
 you eyed

With resentment, an angel's they were at your  
side

And at mine: nor perchance is the day all so  
far

When we both in our prayers, when most  
heartfelt they are,

May murmur the name of that woman now  
gone

From our sight evermore.

“Here, this evening, alone,  
I seek your forgiveness, in opening my heart  
Unto yours,—from this clasp be it never to  
part!

Matilda, the fortune you brought me is gone,  
But a prize richer far than that fortune has  
won

It is yours to confer, and I kneel for that prize,  
‘Tis the heart of my wife!’ With suffused  
happy eyes

She sprang from her seat, flung her arms wide  
apart,

And tenderly closing them round him, his  
heart

Clasp'd in one close embrace to her bosom;  
and there

Droop'd her head on his shoulder; and sobb'd.  
Not despair,

Not sorrow, not even the sense of her loss,  
Flow'd in those happy tears, so oblivious she  
was

Of all save the sense of her own love! Anon,  
However, his words rush'd back to her. “All  
gone,

The fortune you brought me!”

And eyes that were dim  
 With soft tears she upraised: but those tears  
 were for him.

“Gone! my husband?” she said, “tell me all!  
 see! I need,  
 To sober this rapture, so selfish indeed,  
 Fuller sense of affliction.”

“Poor innocent child!”

He kiss'd her fair forehead, and mournfully  
 smiled,  
 As he told her the tale he had heard—some-  
 thing more  
 The gain found in loss of what gain lost of  
 yore.

“Rest, my heart, and my brain, and my right  
 hand for you;  
 And with these, my Matilda, what may I not  
 do?

And know not, I knew not myself till this hour,  
 Which so sternly reveal'd it, my nature's full  
 power.”

“And I, too,” she murmur'd, “I, too, am no  
 more

The mere infant at heart you have known me  
 before.

I have suffer'd since then. I have learn'd  
 much in life.

O take, with the faith I have pledged as a  
 wife,

The heart I have learn'd as a woman to feel!  
 For I—love you, my husband!”

As though to conceal  
 Less from him, than herself, with that motion  
 express'd,

She dropp'd her bright head, and hid all on  
his breast.

“O lovely as woman, beloved as wife!  
Evening star of my heart, light forever my  
life!

If from eyes fix'd too long on this base earth  
thus far

You have miss'd your due homage, dear guar-  
dian star,

Believe that, uplifting those eyes unto heaven,  
There I see you, and know you, and bless the  
light given

To lead me to life's late achievement; my own,  
My blessing, my treasure, my all things in  
one!”

## XII.

How lovely she look'd in the lovely moonlight,  
That stream'd thro' the pane from the blue  
balmy night!

How lovely she look'd in her own lovely youth,  
As she clung to his side full of trust and of  
truth!

How lovely to him, as he tenderly press'd  
Her young head on his bosom, and sadly ca-  
ress'd

The glittering tresses which now shaken loose  
Shower'd gold in his hand, as he smooth'd  
them!

## XIII.

O Muse,

Interpose not one pulse of thine own beating  
heart

'Twi'xt these two silent souls! There's a joy  
 beyond art,  
 And beyond sound the music it makes in the  
 breast.

## XIV.

Here were lovers twice wed, that were happy  
 at least!  
 No music, save such as the nightingales sung,  
 Breath'd their bridals abroad; and no cresset,  
 up-hung,  
 Lit that festival hour, save what soft light was  
 given  
 From the pure stars that peopled the deep-  
 purple heaven.  
 He open'd the casement: he led her with him,  
 Hush'd in heart, to the terrace, dipp'd cool in  
 the dim  
 Lustrous gloom of the shadowy laurels. They  
 heard  
 Aloof, the invisible, rapturous bird,  
 With her wild note bewildering the woodlands;  
 they saw  
 Not unheard, afar off, the hill-rivulet draw  
 His long ripple of moon-kindled wavelets with  
 cheer  
 From the throat of the vale; o'er the dark  
 sapphire sphere  
 The mild, multitudinous lights lay asleep,  
 Pastured free on the midnight, and bright as  
 the sheep  
 Of Apollo in pastoral Thrace; from unknown  
 Hollow glooms freshen'd odors around them  
 were blown

Intermittingly; then the moon dropp'd from  
 their sight,  
 Immersed in the mountains, and put out the  
 light  
 Which no longer they needed to read on the  
 face  
 Of each other's life's last revelation.

The place

Slept sumptuous round them; and Nature,  
 that never  
 Sleeps, but waking reposes, with patient en-  
 deavor  
 Continued about them, unheeded, unseen,  
 Her old, quiet toil in the heart of the green  
 Summer silence, preparing new buds for new  
 blossoms,  
 And stealing a finger of change o'er the bosoms  
 Of the unconscious woodlands; and Time, that  
 halts not  
 His forces, how lovely soever the spot  
 Where their march lies—the wary, gray strat-  
 egist, Time,  
 With the armies of Life, lay encamp'd—Grief  
 and Crime,  
 Love and Faith, in the darkness unheeded;  
 maturing,  
 For his great war with men, new surprises:  
 securing  
 All outlets, pursuing and pushing his foe  
 To his last narrow refuge—the grave.

## xv.

Sweetly though  
 Smiled the stars like new hopes out of heaven,  
 and sweetly  
 Their hearts beat thanksgiving for all things,  
 completely  
 Confiding in that yet untrodden existence  
 Over which they were pausing. To-morrow,  
 resistance  
 And struggle; to-night, Love his hallow'd de-  
 vice  
 Hung forth, and proclaim'd his serene armis-  
 tice.

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## CANTO V.

## I.

When Lucile left Matilda, she sat for long  
 hours  
 In her chamber, fatigued by long overwrought  
 powers,  
 'Mid the signs of departure, about to turn back  
 To her old vacant life, on her old homeless  
 track.  
 She felt her heart falter within her. She sat  
 Like some poor player, gazing dejectedly at  
 The insignia of royalty worn for a night,  
 Exhausted, fatigued, with the dazzle and light.  
 And the effort of passionate feigning; who  
 thinks  
 Of her own meager, rush-lighted garret, and  
 shrinks  
 From the chill of the change that awaits her.



## II.

From these  
Oppressive, and comfortless, blank reveries  
Unable to sleep, she descended the stair  
That led from her room to the garden.

The air,  
With the chill of the dawn, yet unris'n but at  
hand,

Strangely smote on her feverish forehead.

The land  
Lay in darkness and change, like a world in  
its grave:

No sound, save the voice of the long river  
wave

And the crickets that sing all the night!

She stood still,  
Vaguely watching the thin cloud that curl'd  
on the hill.

Emotions, long pent in her breast, were at  
stir,

And the deeps of the spirit were troubled in  
her.

Ah, pale woman! what, with that heart-broken  
look,

Didst thou read then in nature's weird heart-  
breaking book?

Have the wild rains of heaven a father? and  
who

Hath in pity begotten the drops of the dew?

Orion, Arcturus, who pilots them both?

What leads forth in his season the bright Maz-  
aroth?

Hath the darkness a dwelling,—save there, in  
those eyes?

And what name hath that half-reveal'd hope  
in the skies?

Ay, question, and listen! What answer?

The sound  
Of the long river wave through its stone-  
troubled bound,

And the crickets that sing all the night.

There are hours  
Which belong to unknown, supernatural  
powers

Whose sudden and solemn suggestions are all  
That to this race of worms,—stinging creat-  
ures, that crawl,

Lie, and fear, and die daily, beneath their  
own stings,—

Can excuse the blind boast of inherited wings.  
When the soul, on the impulse of anguish,  
hath pass'd

Beyond anguish, and risen into rapture at last;  
When she traverses nature and space, till she  
stands

In the Chamber of Fate; where, through tremu-  
lous hands,

Hum the threads from an old-fashion'd distaff  
uncurl'd.

And those three blind old women sit spinning  
the world.

### III.

The dark was blanch'd, wan, overhead. One  
green star

Was slipping from sight in the pale void afar;  
The spirit of change, and of awe, with faint  
breath,

Were shifting the midnight, above and be-  
neath.

The spirits of awe and of change were around  
And about, and upon her.

A dull muffled sound,

And a hand on her hand, like a ghostly sur-  
prise,

And she felt herself fix'd by the hot hollow  
eyes

Of the Frenchman before her: those eyes  
seemed to burn,

And scorch out the darkness between them,  
and turn,

Into fire as they fix'd her. He look'd like the  
shade

Of a creature by fancy some solitude made,  
And sent forth by the darkness to scare and  
oppress

Some soul of a monk in a waste wilderness.

IV.

“At last, then,—at last, and alone,—I and thou,  
Lucile de Nevers, have we met?

“Hush! I know

Not for me was the tryst. Never mind! it is  
mine;

And whatever led hither those proud steps of  
thine,

They remove not, until we have spoken. My  
hour

Is come; and it holds me and thee in its power,  
As the darkness holds both the horizons. 'Tis  
well!

The timidest maiden that e'er to the spell

Of her first lover's vows listen'd, hush'd with  
 delight,  
 When soft stars are brightly uphanging in the  
 night,  
 Never listen'd, I swear, more unquestion-  
 ingly,  
 Than thy fate hath compell'd thee to listen to  
 me!"

To the sound of his voice, as though out of a  
 dream,  
 She appear'd with a start to awaken.

The stream,

When he ceased, took the night with its moan-  
 ing again,  
 Like the voices of spirits departing in pain.  
 "Continue," she answer'd, "I listen to hear."  
 For a moment he did not reply.

Through the drear

And dim light between them, she saw that  
 his face  
 Was disturb'd. To and fro he continued to  
 pace,  
 With his arms folded close, and the low rest-  
 less stride  
 Of a panther, in circles around her, first wide,  
 Then narrower, nearer, and quicker. At last  
 He stood still, and one long look upon her he  
 cast,  
 "Lucile, dost thou dare to look into my face?  
 Is the sight so repugnant? ha, well! canst  
 thou trace  
 One word of thy writing in this wicked scroll,  
 With thine own name scrawl'd through it, de-  
 facing a soul?"

In his face there was something so wrathful  
and wild,  
That the sight of it scared her.

He saw it, and smiled,  
And then turn'd him from her, renewing  
again

That short restless stride; as though searching  
in vain

For the point of some purpose within him.

“Lucile,  
You shudder to look in my face: do you feel  
No reproach when you look in your own  
heart?”

“No, Duke,  
In my conscience I do not deserve your rebuke:  
Not yours!” she replied.

“No,” he mutter'd again,  
“Gentle justice! you first bid Life hope not,  
and then  
To Despair you say ‘Act not!’ ”

## v.

He watch'd her awhile  
With a chill sort of restless and suffering smile.  
They stood by the wall of the garden. The  
skies,

Dark, somber, were troubled with vague proph-  
ecies

Of the dawn yet far distant. The moon had  
long set,

And all in a glimmering light, pale, and wet  
With the night-dews, the white roses sullenly  
loom'd

Round about her. She spoke not. At length  
he resumed,

“Wretched creatures we are! I and thou—one  
and all!

Only able to injure each other and fall  
Soon or late, in that void which ourselves we  
prepare

For the souls that we boast of! weak insects  
we are!

O heaven! and what has become of them? all  
Those instincts of Eden surviving the Fall:  
That glorious faith in inherited things:  
That sense in the soul of the length of her  
wings;

Gone! all gone! and the wail of the night wind  
sounds human,

Bewailing those once nightly visitants! Woman  
Woman, what hast thou done with my youth?  
Give again,

Give me back the young heart that I gave  
thee . . . in vain!”

“Duke!” she falter’d.

“Yes, yes!” he went on, “I was not  
Always thus! what I once was I have not for-  
got.”

VI.

As the wind that heaps sand in a desert, there  
stirr’d

Through his voice an emotion that swept every  
word

Into one angry wail; as, with feverish change,  
He continued his monologue, fitful and strange.

“Woe to him in whose nature, once kindl’d,  
the torch

Of Passion burns downward to blacken and  
scorch!  
But shame, shame and sorrow, O woman, to  
thee  
Whose hand sow'd the seed of destruction in  
me!  
Whose lip taught the lesson of falsehood to  
mine!  
Whose looks made me doubt lies that look'd so  
divine."  
My soul by thy beauty was slain in its sleep:  
And if tears I mistrust, 'tis that thou too canst  
weep!  
Well! . . . how utter soever it be, one mistake  
In the love of a man, what more change need  
it make  
In the steps of his soul through the course  
love began,  
Than all other mistakes in the life of a man?  
And I said to myself, "I am young yet: too  
young  
To have wholly survived my own portion  
among  
The great needs of man's life, or exhausted its  
joys;  
What is broken? one only of youth's pleasant  
toys!  
Shall I be the less welcome, wherever I go,  
For one passion survived? No! the roses will  
blow  
As of yore, as of yore will the nightingales  
sing,  
Not less sweetly for one blossom cancel'd from  
Spring!

Hast thou loved, O my heart? to thy love yet  
remains  
All the wide loving-kindness of nature. The  
plains  
And the hills with each summer their verdure  
renew  
Would thou be as they are? do thou then as  
they do,  
Let the dead sleep in peace. Would the living  
divine  
Where they slumber? Let only new flowers  
be the sign!"

"Vain! all vain! . . . For when, laughing, the  
wine I would quaff  
I remember'd too well all it cost me to laugh.  
Through the revel it was but the old song I  
heard,  
Through the crowd the old footsteps behind  
me they stirr'd,  
In the night-wind, the starlight, the murmurs  
of even  
In the ardors of earth, and the languors of  
heaven,  
I could trace nothing more, nothing more  
through the spheres,  
But the sound of old sobs, and the track of old  
tears!  
It was with me the night long in dreaming or  
waking,  
It abided in loathing, when daylight was  
breaking,  
The burden of the bitterness in me! Behold,  
All my days were become as a tale that is told.



And I said to my sight, "No good thing shalt  
 thou see,  
 For the noonday is turned to darkness in me.  
 In the house of Oblivion my bed I have made."  
 And I said to the grave, 'Lo, my father!' and  
 said  
 To the worm, 'Lo, my sister!' The dust to  
 the dust,  
 And one end to the wicked shall be with the  
 just!"

## VII.

He ceased, as a wind that wails out on the  
 night,  
 And moans itself mute. Through the indis-  
 tinct light  
 A voice clear, and tender, and pure with a tone  
 Of ineffable pity replied to his own.  
 "And say you, and deem you, that I wreck'd  
 your life?  
 Alas! Duc de Luvois, had I been your wife  
 By a fraud of the heart which could yield you  
 alone  
 For the love in your nature a lie in my own,  
 Should I not, in deceiving, have injured you  
 worse?  
 Yes, I then should have merited justly your  
 curse,  
 For I then should have wrong'd you!"  
 "Wrong'd! ah, is it so?  
 You could never have loved me?"  
 "Duke!"  
 "Never? oh, no!"

(He broke into a fierce, angry laugh, as he said)

“Yet, lady, you knew that I loved you: you led  
My love on to lay to its heart, hour by hour,  
All the pale, cruel, beautiful, passionless  
power

Shut up in that cold face of yours! was this  
well?

But enough! not on you would I vent the wild  
hell

Which has grown in my heart. Oh, that man,  
first and last

He tramples in triumph my life! he has cast  
His shadow 'twixt me and the sun . . . let it  
pass!

My hate yet may find him!”

She murmur'd, “Alas!

These words, at least, spare me the pain of re-  
ply.

Enough, Duc de Luvois! farewell. I shall try  
To forget every word I have heard, every sight  
That has grieved and appall'd me in this  
wretched night

Which must witness our final farewell. May  
you, Duke,

Never know greater cause your own heart to  
rebuke

Than mine thus to wrong and afflict you have  
had!

Adieu!”

“Stay, Lucile, stay!” . . . he groaned, “I am  
mad,

Brutalized, blind with pain! I know not what  
I said.

I meant it not, but" (he moan'd, drooping  
his head)

"Forgive me! I—have I so wrong'd you, Lu-  
cile?

I . . . have I . . . forgive me, forgive me!"  
"I feel

Only sad, very sad to the soul," she said, "far,  
Far too sad for resentment."

"Yet stand as you are  
One moment," he murmur'd. "I think, could  
I gaze

Thus awhile on your face, the old innocent  
days

Would come back upon me, and this scorching  
heart

Free itself in hot tears. Do not, do not depart  
Thus, Lucile! stay one moment. I know why  
you shrink,

Why you shudder; I read in your face what  
you think.

Do not speak to me of it. And yet, if you will,  
Whatever you say, my own lips shall be still.  
I lied. And the truth, now, could justify  
nought.

There are battles, it may be, in which to have  
fought

Is more shameful than, simply, to fail. Yet,  
Lucile,

Had you help'd me to bear what you forced me  
to feel—"

"Could I help you," she murmur'd, "but what  
can I say

That your life will respond to?" "My life?"  
he sigh'd "Nay,

My life hath brought forth only evil, and there  
 The wild wind hath planted the wild weed:  
 yet ere

You exclaim, 'Fling the weed to the flames,'  
 think again

Why the field is so barren. With all other men  
 First love, though it perish from life, only goes  
 Like the primrose that falls to make way for  
 the rose.

For a man at least most men, may love on  
 through life:

Love in fame; love in knowledge; in work:  
 earth is rife

With labor, and therefore, with love, for a man.  
 If one love fails, another succeeds, and the  
 plan

Of man's life includes love in all objects! But  
 I?

All such loves from my life through its whole  
 destiny

Fate excluded. The love that I gave you, alas!  
 Was the sole love that life gave to me. Let  
 that pass!

It perish'd and all perish'd with it. Ambition?  
 Wealth left nothing to add to my social condi-  
 tion.

Fame? But fame in itself presupposes some  
 great

Field wherein to pursue and attain it. The  
 State?

I, to cringe to an upstart? The Camp? I, to  
 draw

From its sheath the old sword of the Dukes of  
 Luvois

'To defend usurpation? Books, then? Science,  
 Art?  
 But, alas! I was fashion'd for action: my  
 heart,  
 Wither'd thing though it be, I should hardly  
 compress  
 'Twixt the leaves of a treatise on Statics: life's  
 stress  
 Needs scope, not contraction! what rests? to  
 wear out  
 At some dark northern court an existence, no  
 doubt,  
 In wretched and paltry intrigues for a cause  
 As hopeless as in my own life! By the laws  
 Of a fate I can neither control nor dispute,  
 I am what I am!"

## VIII.

For a while she was mute.  
 Then she answer'd, "We are our own fates.  
 Our own deeds  
 Are our doomsmen. Man's life was made not  
 for men's creeds  
 But men's action. And, Duc de Luvois, I  
 might say  
 That all life attests, that 'the will makes the  
 way.'  
 Is the land of our birth less the land of our  
 birth,  
 Or its claim the less strong, or its cause the less  
 worth  
 Our upholding, because the white lily no more  
 Is as sacred as all that it bloom'd for of yore?  
 Yet be that as it may be; I cannot perchance

Judge this matter. I am but a woman, and  
France  
Has for me simpler duties. Large hope, though  
Eugene  
De Luvois, should be yours. There is purpose  
in pain,  
Otherwise it were devilish. I trust in my soul  
That the great master hand which sweeps over  
the whole  
Of this deep harp of life, if at moments it  
stretch  
To shrill tension some one wailing nerve,  
means to fetch  
Its response the truest, most stringent, and  
smart,  
Its pathos the purest, from out the wrung  
heart  
Whose faculties, flaccid it may be, if less  
Sharply strung, sharply smitten, had fail'd to  
express  
Just the one note the great final harmony  
needs.  
And what best proves there's life in a heart?  
—that it bleeds?  
Grant a cause to remove, grant an end to at-  
tain,  
Grant both to be just, and what mercy in pain!  
Cease to sin with the sorrow! See morning  
begin!  
Pain must burn itself out if not fuel'd by sin.  
There is hope in yon hill-tops, and love in yon  
light.  
Let hate and despondency die with the night!"

He was moved by her words. As some poor  
wretch confined

In cells loud with meaningless laughter, whose  
mind

Wanders trackless amidst its own ruins, may  
hear

A voice heard long since, silenced many a year,  
And now, 'mid mad ravings recaptured again,  
Sing through the caged lattice a once well-  
known strain,

Which brings back his boyhood upon it, until  
The mind's ruin'd crevices graciously fill  
With music and memory, and as it were,  
The long-troubled spirit grows slowly aware  
Of the mockery round it, and shrinks from each  
thing

It once sought,—the poor idiot who pass'd for  
a king,

Hard by, with his squalid straw crown, now  
confess'd

A madman more painfully mad than the rest,—  
So the sound of her voice, as it there wander'd  
o'er

His echoing heart, seem'd in part to restore  
The forces of thought: he recaptured the whole  
Of his life by the light which, in passing, her  
soul

Reflected on his: he appear'd to awake  
From a dream, and perceived he had dream'd  
a mistake:

His spirit was soften'd yet troubled in him:  
He felt his lips falter, his eyesight grow dim,  
But he murmur'd . . .

“Lucile, not for me that sun's light

Which reveals—not restores—the wild havoc of  
 night.  
 There are some creatures born for the night,  
 not the day.  
 Broken-hearted the nightingale hides in the  
 spray,  
 And the owl's moody mind in his own hollow  
 tower  
 Dwells muffled. Be darkness henceforward  
 my dower.  
 Light, be sure, in that darkness there dwells,  
 by which eyes  
 Grown familiar with ruins may yet recognize  
 Enough desolation."

## IX.

The pride that claims here  
 On earth to itself (howsoever severe  
 To itself it may be) God's dread office and right  
 Of punishing sin, is a sin in heaven's sight,  
 And against heaven's service.

"Eugene de Luvois,  
 Leave the judgment to Him who alone knows  
 the law.  
 Surely no man can be his own judge, least of  
 all  
 His own doomsman."

Her words seem'd to fall  
 With the weight of tears in them.  
 He look'd up, and saw  
 That sad serene countenance, mournful as  
 law  
 And tender as pity, bow'd o'er him: and heard  
 In some thicket the matinal chirp of a bird.



## x.

“Vulgar natures alone suffer vainly.

“Eugene,”

She continued, “in life we have met once  
again,

And once more life parts us. Yon day-spring  
for me

Lifts the vail of a future in which it may be  
We shall meet nevermore. Grant, oh grant to  
me yet

The belief that it is not in vain we have met!  
I plead for the future. A new horoscope  
I would cast: will you read it? I plead for a  
hope:

I plead for a memory; yours, yours alone,  
To restore or to spare. Let the hope be your  
own,

Be the memory mine.

“Once of yore, when for man  
Faith yet lived, ere this age of the sluggard  
began,

Men, aroused to the knowledge of evil, fled far  
From the fading rose-gardens of sense to the  
war

With the Pagan, the cave in the desert, and  
sought

Not repose, but employment in action or  
thought,

Life's strong earnest, in all things! oh think  
not of me,

But yourself! for I plead for your own destiny:  
I plead for your life, with its duties undone,  
With its claims unappeased, and its trophies  
unwon;

And in pleading for life's fair fulfillment, I  
plead  
For all that you miss, and for all that you  
need."

## XI.

Through the calm crystal air, faint and fair,  
as she spoke,  
A clear, chilly chime from a church-turret  
broke;  
And the sound of her voice, with the sound of  
the bell,  
On his ear where he kneel'd, softly, soothingly  
fell.  
All within him was wild and confused, as within  
A chamber deserted in some roadside inn,  
Where, passing, wild traveler paused, over-  
night,  
To quaff and carouse; in each socket each  
light  
Is extinct; crash'd the glasses, and scrawl'd is  
the wall  
With wild ribald ballads; serenely o'er all.  
For the first time perceived, where the dawn-  
light creeps faint  
Through the wrecks of that orgy, the face of  
a saint  
Seen through some broken frame, appears not-  
ing meanwhile  
The ruin all round with a sorrowful smile.  
And he gazed round. The curtains of Dark-  
ness half drawn  
Oped behind her; and pure as the pure light  
of dawn

She stood, bathed in morning, and seem'd to  
 his eyes  
 From their sight to be melting away in the  
 skies  
 That expand around her.

## XII.

There pass'd through his head  
 A fancy—a vision. That woman was dead  
 He had loved long ago—loved and lost! dead  
 to him,  
 Dead to all the life left him; but there, in the  
 dim  
 Dewy light of the dawn, stood a spirit; 'twas  
 hers;  
 And he said to the soul of Lucile de Nevers:  
 “O soul to its sources departing away!  
 Pray for mine, if one soul for another may  
 pray.  
 I to ask have no right, thou to give hast no  
 power,  
 One hope to my heart. But in this parting  
 hour  
 I name not my heart and I speak not to thine.  
 Answer, soul of Lucile, to this dark soul of  
 mine,  
 Does not soul owe to soul, what to heart heart  
 denies,  
 Hope, when hope is salvation? Behold, in yon  
 skies,  
 This wild night is passing away while I speak:  
 Lo, above us, the day-spring beginning to  
 break!

Something wakens within me, and warms to  
the beam.

Is it hope that awakens? or do I but dream?  
I know not. It may be, perchance, the first  
spark

Of a new light within me to solace the dark  
Unto which I return; or perchance it may be  
The last spark of fires half extinguish'd in me.  
I know not. Thou goest thy way: I my own;  
For good or for evil, I know not. Alone  
This I know we are parting. I wish'd to say  
more,

But no matter! 'twill pass. All between us is  
o'er.

Forget the wild words of to-night. 'Twas the  
pain

For long years hoarded up, that rush'd from  
me again.

I was unjust: forgive me. Spare now to re-  
prove

Other words, other deeds. It was madness,  
not love,

That you thwarted this night. What is done  
is now done.

Death remains to avenge it, or life to atone.

I was madden'd! delirious! I saw you return  
To him—not to me; and I felt my heart burn  
With a fierce thirst for vengeance—and thus  
. . . let it pass!

Long thoughts these, and so brief the mo-  
ments, alas!

Thou goest thy way, and I mine. I suppose  
'Tis to meet nevermore. Is it not so? Who  
knows,

Or who heeds, where the exile from Paradise  
 flies?  
 Or what altars of his in the desert may rise?  
 It is not so, Lucile? Well, well! Thus then  
 we part  
 Once again, soul from soul, as before heart  
 from heart!"

## xiii.

And again, clearer far than the chime of the  
 bell,  
 That voice on his sense softly, soothingly fell.  
 "Our two paths must part us, Eugene; for my  
 own  
 Seems no more through that world in which  
 henceforth alone  
 You must work out (as now I believe that you  
 will)  
 The hope which you speak of. That work I  
 shall still  
 (If I live) watch and welcome, and bless far  
 away.  
 Doubt not this. But mistake not the thought,  
 if I say  
 That the great moral combat between human  
 life  
 And each human soul must be single. The  
 strife  
 None can share, though by all its results may  
 be known.  
 When the soul arms for battle, she goes forth  
 alone.  
 I say not, indeed, we shall meet nevermore,

For I know not. But meet, as we have met of  
yore,  
I know that we cannot. Perchance we may  
meet  
By the death-bed, the tomb, in the crowd, in  
the street,  
Or in solitude even, but never again  
Shall we meet from henceforth as we have  
met, Eugene.  
For we know not the way we are going, nor  
yet  
Where our two ways may meet, or may cross.  
Life hath set  
No landmarks before us. But this, this alone,  
I will promise: whatever your path, or my  
own,  
If, for once in the conflict before you, it chance  
That the Dragon prevail, and with cleft shield,  
and lance  
Lost or shatter'd, borne down by the stress of  
the war,  
You falter and hesitate, if from afar  
I, still watching (unknown to yourself, it may  
be)  
O'er the conflict to which I conjure you, should  
see  
That my presence could rescue, support you,  
or guide  
In the hour of that need I shall be at your side,  
To warn, if you will, or incite, or control;  
And again, once again, we shall meet, soul to  
soul!"

## XIV.

The voice ceased.

He uplifted his eyes.

All alone

He stood on the bare edge of dawn. She was  
gone

Like a star, when up bay after bay of the  
night,

Ripples in, wave on wave, the broad ocean of  
light.

And at once, in her place, was the Sunrise! It  
rose

In its sumptuous splendor and solemn repose,  
The supreme revelation of light. Domes of  
gold,

Realms of rose, in the Orient! And breath-  
less, and bold,

While the great gates of heaven roll'd back  
one by one,

The bright herald angel stood stern in the sun!  
Thrice holy Eospheros! Light's reign began  
In the heaven, on the earth, in the heart of  
the man.

The dawn on the mountains! the dawn every-  
where!

Light! silence! the fresh innovations of air!  
O earth, and O ether! A butterfly breeze  
Floated up, flutter'd down, and poised blithe  
on the trees.

Through the reveling woods, o'er the sharp-  
rippled stream,

Up the vale slow uncoiling itself out of dream,  
Around the brown meadows adown the hill-  
slope,

The spirits of morning were whispering  
 "Hope!"

## xv.

He uplifted his eyes. In the place where she  
 stood

But a moment before, and where now roll'd  
 the flood

Of the sunrise all golden, he seem'd to behold,  
 In the young light of sunrise, an image unfold  
 Of his own youth,—its ardors—its promise of  
 fame—

Its ancestral ambition; and France by the  
 name

Of his sires seem'd to call him. There, hover'd  
 in light,

That image aloft, o'er the shapeless and bright  
 And Aureorean clouds, which themselves  
 seem'd to be

Brilliant fragments of that golden world,  
 wherein he

Had once dwelt, a native!

There, rooted and bound  
 To the earth, stood the man, gazing at it!

Around  
 The rims of the sunrise it hover'd and shone  
 Transcendent, that type of a youth that was  
 gone:

And he—as the body may yearn for the soul,  
 Lo, he yearn'd to embody that image. His  
 whole

Heart arose to regain it.

"And is it too late?"

No! for Time is a fiction, and limits not fate.



Thought alone is eternal. Time thralls it in  
vain.

For the thought that springs upward and  
yearns to regain

The pure source of spirit, there is no Too Late.  
As the stream to its first mountain levels,  
elate

In the fountain arises, the spirit in him  
Arose to that image. The image waned dim  
Into heaven; and heavenward with it, to melt  
As it melted, in day's broad expansion, he felt  
With a thrill, sweet and strange, and intense—  
awed, amazed—

Something soar and ascend in his soul, as he  
gazed.

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## CANTO VI.

### I.

Man is born on a battle-field. Round him, to  
rend

Or resist, the dread Powers he displaces attend,  
By the cradle which Nature, amidst the stern  
shocks

That have shatter'd creation, and shapen it,  
rocks.

He leaps with a wail into being; and lo!  
His own mother, fierce Nature herself, is his  
foe.

Her whirlwinds are roused into wrath o'er his  
head:

'Neath his feet roll her earthquakes: her soli-  
tudes spread

To daunt him: her forces dispute his command:  
 Her snows fall to freeze him: her suns burn  
 to brand:

Her seas yawn to engulf him: her rocks rise to  
 crush:

And the lion and leopard, allied, lurk to rush  
 On their startled invader.

In lone Malabar,  
 Where the infinite forest spreads breathless  
 and far,

'Mid the cruel of eye and the stealthy of claw  
 (Striped and spotted destroyers!) he sees, pale  
 with awe.

On the menacing edge of a fiery sky  
 Grim Doorga, blue limb'd and red-handed, go  
 by,

And the first thing he worships is Terror.

Anon,

Still impell'd by necessity hungrily on,  
 He conquers the realms of his own self-reli-  
 ance,

And the last cry of fear wakes the first of de-  
 fiance,

From the serpent he crushes its poisonous soul:  
 Smitten down in his path see the dead lion roll!  
 On toward Heaven the son of Alcmena strides  
 high on

The heads of the Hydra, the spoils of the lion:  
 And man, conquering terror, is worship'd by  
 man.

A camp has this world been since first it be-  
 gan!

From his tents sweeps the roving Arabian; at  
    peace,  
A mere wandering shepherd that follows the  
    fleece;  
But, warring his way through a world's des-  
    tinies,  
Lo, from Delhi, from Bagdad, from Cordova,  
    rise  
Domes of empiry, dower'd with science and art,  
Schools, libraries, forums, the palace, the mart!

New realms to man's soul have been con-  
    quer'd. But those  
Forthwith they are peopled for man by new  
    foes!  
The stars keep their secrets, the earth hides  
    her own,  
And bold must the man be that braves the Un-  
    known!  
Not a truth has to art or to science been given,  
But brows have ached for it, and souls toil'd  
    and striven;  
And many have striven, and many have fail'd,  
And many died, slain by the truth they assail'd.  
But when Man has tamed Nature, asserted his  
    place  
And dominion, behold! he is brought face to  
    face  
With a new foe—himself!  
                                Nor may man on his shield  
Ever rest, for his foe is forever a field,  
Danger ever at hand, till the armed Archangel  
Sound o'er him the trump of earth's final  
    evangel.

## II.

Silence straightway, stern Muse, the soft cymbals of pleasure,

Be all bronzen these numbers, and martial the measure!

Breathe, sonorously breathe, o'er the spirit in me

One strain, sad and stern, of that deep Epopee  
Which thou, from the fashionless cloud of far  
time,

Chantest lonely, when Victory, pale, and sublime

In the light of the aureole over her head,  
Hears, and heeds not the wound in her heart  
fresh and red.

Blown wide by the blare of the clarion, unfold  
The shrill clanging curtains of war!

And behold

A vision!

The antique Heracleean seats;  
And the long Black Sea billow that once bore  
those fleets,

Which said to the winds, "Be ye, too, Genoese!"

And the red angry sands of the chafed Cheronese;

And the two foes of man, War and Winter,  
allied

Round the Armies of England and France, side  
by side

Enduring and dying (Gaul and Briton abreast!)  
Where the towers of the North fret the skies  
of the East.

## III.

Since that sunrise, which rose through the  
 calm linden stems  
 O'er Lucile and Eugene, in the garden at Ems,  
 Through twenty-five seasons encircling the sun,  
 This planet of ours on its pathway hath gone,  
 And the fates that I sing of have flowed with  
 the fates  
 Of a world, in the red wake of war, round the  
 gates  
 Of that doom'd and heroical city, in which  
 (Fire crowning the rampart, blood bathing the  
 ditch!)  
 At bay, fights the Russian as some hunted  
 bear,  
 Whom the huntsmen have hemm'd round at  
 last in his lair.

## IV.

A fang'd, arid plain, sapp'd with unground  
 fire,  
 Soak'd with snow, torn with shot, mash'd to  
 one gory mire!  
 There Fate's iron scale hangs in horrid sus-  
 pense,  
 While those two famish'd ogres—the Siege,  
 the Defense,  
 Face to face, through a vapor frore, dismal and  
 dun,  
 Glare, scenting the breath of each other.

The one

Double-bodied, two-headed—by separate ways  
 Winding, serpent-wise, nearer; the other, each  
 day's

Sullen toil adding size to,—concentrated, solid,  
 Indefatigable—the brass-fronted, embodied,  
 And audible *autos* gone somberly forth  
 To the world from that Autocrat Will of the  
 north!

## v.

In the dawn of a moody October, a pale  
 Ghostly motionless vapor began to prevail  
 Over city and camp; like the garment of death  
 Which (is formed by) the face it conceals.

'Twas the breath  
 War, yet drowsily yawning, began to suspire;  
 Where through, here and there, flash'd an eye  
 of red fire,

And closed, from some rampart beginning to  
 bellow

Hoarse challenge; replied to anon, through the  
 yellow

And sulphurous twilight: till day reel'd and  
 rock'd

And roar'd into dark. Then the midnight was  
 mock'd

With fierce apparitions. Ring'd round by a  
 rain

Of red fire, and of iron, the murderous plain  
 Flared with fitful combustion; where fitfully  
 fell

Afar off the fatal, disgorged *scharpenelle*.

And fired the horizon, and singed the coil'd  
 gloom

With wings of swift flame round that City of  
 Doom.

## VI.

So the day—so the night! So by night, so by  
 day,  
 With stern patient pathos, while time wears  
 away,  
 In the trench flooded through, in the wind  
 where it wails.  
 In the snow where it falls, in the fire where it  
 hails  
 Shot and shell—link by link, out of hardship  
 and pain.  
 Toil, sickness, endurance, is forged the bronze  
 chain  
 Of those terrible siege-lines!  
No change to that toil
 Save the mine's sudden leap from the treacher-  
 ous soil,  
 Save the midnight attack, save the groans of  
 the maim'd,  
 And Death's daily obolous due, whether claim'd  
 By man or by nature.

## VII.

Time passes. The dumb,  
 Bitter, snow-bound, and sullen November is  
 come.  
 And its snows have been bathed in the blood  
 of the brave;  
 And many a young heart has glutted the  
 grave:  
 And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,  
 And those bleak heights henceforth shall be  
 famous in story.

## VIII.

The moon, swathed in storm, has long set:  
 through the camp

No sound save the sentinel's slow sullen tramp,  
 The distant explosion, the wild sleety wind,  
 That seems searching for something it never  
 can find.

The midnight is turning: the lamp is nigh  
 spent:

And, wounded and lone, in a desolate tent  
 Lies a young British soldier whose sword . . .

In this place,

However, my Muse is compell'd to retrace  
 Her precipitous steps and revert to the past.  
 The shock which had suddenly shatter'd at last  
 Alfred Vargrave's fantastical holiday nature,  
 Had sharply drawn forth to his full size and  
 stature

The real man, conceal'd till that moment be-  
 neath

All he yet had appeared. From the gay broid-  
 er'd sheath

Which a man in his wrath flings aside, even so  
 Leaps the keen trenchant steel summon'd forth  
 by a blow.

And thus loss or fortune gave value to life  
 The wife gain'd a husband, the husband a wife,  
 In that home which, though humbled and nar-  
 row'd by fate,

Was enlarged and ennobled by love. Low  
 their state,

But large their possessions.

Sir Ridley, forgiven



By those unwittingly brought nearer heaven  
 By one fraudulent act, than through all his  
 sleek speech

The hypocrite brought his own soul, safe from  
 reach

Of the law, died abroad.

Cousin John, heart and hand,  
 Purse and person, henceforth (honest man!)  
 took his stand

By Matilda and Alfred; guest, guardian, and  
 friend

Of the home he both shared and assured, to  
 the end,

With his large lively love. Alfred Vargrave  
 meanwhile

Faced the world's frown, consoled by his wife's  
 faithful smile

Late in life, he began life in earnest; and still  
 With the tranquil exertion of resolute will,

Through long, and laborious, and difficult days,  
 Out of manifold failure, by wearisome ways,

Work'd his way through the world; till at last  
 he began

(Reconciled to the work which mankind claims  
 for man),

After years of unwitness'd, unwearied en-  
 deavor,

Years impassion'd yet patient, to realize ever  
 More clear on the broad stream of current  
 opinion

The reflex of powers in himself—that dominion  
 Which the life of one man, if his life be a truth,  
 May assert o'er the life of mankind. Thus, his  
 youth

In his manhood renew'd, fame and fortune he  
won

Working only for home, love, and duty.

One son  
Matilda had borne him; but scarce had the  
boy,

With all Eton yet fresh in his full heart's frank  
joy,

The darling of young soldier comrades, just  
glanced

Down the glad dawn of manhood at life, when  
it chanced

That a blight sharp and sudden was breath'd  
o'er the bloom

Of his joyous and generous years, and the  
gloom

Of a grief premature on their fair promise  
fell:

No light cloud like those which, for June to  
dispel,

Captious April engenders; but deep as his own  
Deep nature. Meanwhile, ere I fully make  
known

The cause of this sorrow, I track the event.

When first a wild war-note through England  
was sent,

He, transferring without either token or word  
To friend, parent, or comrade, a yet virgin  
sword,

From a holiday troop, to one bound for the war,  
Had march'd forth, with his eyes that saw  
death in the star

Whence others sought glory. Thus fighting,  
he fell

On the red field of Inkerman; found, who can  
 tell  
 By what miracle, breathing, though shatter'd,  
 and borne  
 To the rear by his comrades, pierced, bleeding  
 and torn,  
 Where for long days and nights, with the  
 wound in his side,  
 He lay, dark.

## IX.

But a wound deeper far, undescried,  
 The young heart was rankling; for there, of a  
 truth,  
 In the first earnest faith of a pure pensive  
 youth,  
 A love large as life, deep and changeless as  
 death,  
 Lay ensheath'd: and that love, ever fretting its  
 sheath,  
 The frail scabbard of life pierced and wore  
 through and through.  
 There are loves in man's life for which time  
 can renew  
 All that time may destroy. Lives there are,  
 though, in love,  
 Which cling to one faith, and die with it; nor  
 move,  
 Though earthquakes may shatter the shrine.  
 Whence or how  
 Love laid claim to this young life, it matters  
 not now.

## x.

Oh, is it a phantom? a dream of the night?  
 A vision which fever hath fashion'd to sight?  
 The wind wailing ever, with motion uncer-  
 tain,

Sways sighingly there the drench'd tent's tat-  
 tered curtain,

To and fro, up and down.

But it is not the wind  
 That is lifting it now: and it is not the mind  
 That hath moulded that vision.

A pale woman enters,  
 As wan as the lamp's waning light, which con-  
 centrates

Its dull glare upon her. With eyes dim and  
 dimmer,

There, all in a slumberous and shadowy glim-  
 mer,

The sufferer sees that still form floating on,  
 And feels faintly aware that he is not alone.

She is flitting before him. She pauses. She  
 stands

By his bedside all silent. She lays her white  
 hands

On the brow of the boy. A light finger is  
 pressing

Softly, softly, the sore wounds; the hot blood-  
 stain'd dressing

Slips from them. A comforting quietude steals  
 Through the rack'd weary frame; and, through-  
 out it, he feels

The slow sense of a merciful, mild neighbor-  
 hood.

Something smooths the toss'd pillow. Beneath a gray hood  
 Of rough serge, two intense tender eyes are bent o'er him,  
 And thrill through and through him. The sweet form before him,  
 It is surely Death's angel Life's last vigil keeping:  
 A soft voice says . . . "Sleep!"  
 And he sleeps: he is sleeping.

## XI.

He waked before dawn. Still the vision is there:  
 Still that pale woman moves not. A ministr'ring care  
 Meanwhile has been silently changing and cheering  
 The aspect of all things around him.  
 Revering,  
 Some power unknown and benignant, he bless'd  
 In silence the sense of salvation. And rest  
 Having loosen'd the mind's tangled meshes, he faintly  
 Sigh'd . . . "Say what thou art, blessed dream of a saintly  
 And minist'ring spirit!"  
 A whisper serene  
 Slid, softer than silence . . . "The Sœur Seraphine,  
 A poor Sister of Charity. Shun to inquire  
 Aught further, young soldier. The son of thy sire,

For the sake of that sire, I reclaim from the  
grave.

Thou didst not shun death: shun not life: 'Tis  
more brave

To live than to die. Sleep!"

He sleeps: he is sleeping.

XII.

He waken'd again, when the dawn was just  
steeping

The skies with chill splendor. And there,  
never flitting,

Never flitting, that mercy was sitting.

As the dawn to the darkness, so life seemed  
returning

Slowly, feebly within him. The night-lamp  
yet burning,

Made ghastly the glimmering daybreak.

He said,

"If thou be of the living, and not of the dead,  
Sweet minister, pour out yet further the heal-  
ing

Of that balmy voice; if it may be, revealing  
Thy mission of mercy; whence art thou?"

"O son

Of Matilda and Alfred, it matters not! One  
Who is not of the living nor yet of the dead:  
To thee, and to others, alive yet" . . . she  
said . . .

"So long as there liveth the poor gift in me  
Of this ministration; to them, and to thee,  
Dead in all things beside. A French Nun,  
whose vocation

Is now by this bedside. A nun hath no nation.

Wherever man suffers, or woman may soothe,  
There her land! there her kindred!"

She bent down to smooth  
The hot pillow; and added . . . "Yet more  
than another.

Is thy life dear to me. For thy father, thy  
mother,  
I know them—I know them."

"Oh, can it be? you!

My dearest dear father! my mother! you knew,  
You know them?"

She bowed, half-averting her head  
In silence.

He brokenly, timidly said,  
"Do they know I am thus?"

"Hush!" . . . she smiled, as she drew  
From her bosom two letters: and—can it be  
true?

That beloved and familiar writing!

He burst  
Into tears . . . "My poor mother—my father!  
the worst  
Will have reach'd them!"

"No, no!" she exclaimed, with a smile,  
"They know you are living; they know that  
meanwhile

I am watching beside you. Young soldier,  
weep not!"

But still on the nun's nursing bosom, the hot  
Fever'd brow of the boy weeping wildly is  
press'd.

There, at last, the young heart sobs itself into  
rest:

And he hears, as it were between smiling and weeping.  
 The calm voice say . . . "Sleep!"  
 And he sleeps, he is sleeping.

## XIII.

And day follow'd day. And, as wave followed wave,  
 With the tide, day by day, life, reissuing, drave  
 Through that young hardy frame novel currents of health.  
 Yet some strange obstruction, which life's health by stealth  
 Seemed to cherish, impeded life's progress.  
 And still  
 A feebleness, less of the frame than the will,  
 Clung about the sick man: hid and harbor'd within  
 The sad hollow eyes: pinch'd the cheek pale and thin:  
 And clothed the wan fingers with languor.  
 And there,  
 Day by day, night by night, unremitting in care,  
 Unwearied in watching, so cheerful of mien.  
 And so gentle of hand sat the Sœur Seraphine!

## XIV.

A strange woman truly! not young; yet her face  
 Wan and worn as it was, bore about it the trace  
 Of a beauty which time could not ruin. For  
 the whole



Quiet cheek, youth's lost bloom left transpar-  
 ent, the soul  
 Seemed to fill with its own light, like some  
 sunny fountain  
 Everlastingly fed from far off the mountain  
 That pours, in a garden deserted, its streams,  
 And all the more lovely for loneliness seems.  
 So that, watching that face, you would scarce  
 pause to guess  
 The years which its calm careworn lines might  
 express,  
 Feeling only what suffering with these must  
 have past  
 To have perfected there so much sweetness at  
 last.

## xv.

Thus, one bronzen evening, when day had put  
 out  
 His brief thrifty fires, and the wind was about,  
 The nun, watchful still by the boy, on his own  
 Laid a firm quiet hand, and the deep tender  
 tone  
 Of her voice moved the silence.  
 She said . . . "I have heal'd  
 These wounds of the body. Why hast thou  
 conceal'd,  
 Young soldier, that yet open wound in the  
 heart?  
 Wilt thou trust no hand near it?"  
 He winced, with a start  
 As one that is suddenly touched on the spot  
 From which every nerve derives suffering.

“What?  
Lies my heart, then, so bare?” he moaned bit-  
terly.

“Nay,”  
With compassionate accents she hastened to  
say,

“Do you think that these eyes are with sorrow,  
young man,  
So all unfamiliar, indeed, as to scan Her fea-  
tures yet know them not?”

“Oh, was it spoken,  
‘Go ye forth, heal the sick, lift the low, bind  
the broken!’

Of the body alone? is our mission, then, done,  
When we leave the bruised hearts, if we bind  
the bruised bone?

Nay, is not the mission of mercy twofold?

Whence twofold, perchance, are the power,  
that we hold

To fulfill it, of Heaven! For Heaven doth still  
To us Sisters, it may be, who seek it, send  
skill

Won from long intercourse with affliction, and  
art

Help’d of Heaven, to bind up the broken of  
heart.

Trust to me!” (His two feeble hands in her  
own

She drew gently.) “Trust to me!” (she said,  
with soft tone):

“I am not so dead in remembrance to all  
I have died to in this world, but what I re-  
call

Enough of its sorrow, enough of its trial,

To grieve for both—save from both haply!  
 The dial  
 Receives many shades, and each points to the  
 sun,  
 The shadows are many, the sunlight is one.  
 Life's sorrows still fluctuate: God's love does  
 not.  
 And His love is unchanged, when it changes  
 our lot.  
 Looking up to this light, which is common to  
 all,  
 And down to these shadows, on each side, that  
 fall  
 In time's silent circle, so various for each,  
 Is it nothing to know that they never can  
 reach  
 So far, but what light lies beyond them for-  
 ever?  
 Trust to me! Oh, if this hour I endeavor  
 To trace the shade creeping across the young  
 life  
 Which, in prayer till' this hour, I have watch'd  
 through its strife  
 With the shadow of death, 'tis with this faith  
 alone,  
 That, in tracing the shade, I shall find out the  
 sun.  
 Trust to me!"

She paused: he was weeping. Small need  
 Of added appeal, or entreaty, indeed,  
 Had those gentle accents to win from his pale  
 And parch'd, trembling lips, as it rose, the  
 brief tale  
 Of a life's early sorrow. The story is old,

And in words few as may be shall straightway  
be told.

XVI.

A few years ago, ere the fair form of Peace  
Was driven from Europe, a young girl—the  
niece

Of a French noble, leaving an old Norman pile  
By the wild northern seas, came to dwell for  
awhile

With a lady allied to her race—an old dame  
Of a threefold legitimate virtue, and name,  
In the Faubourg Saint Germain.

Upon that fair child,  
From childhood, nor father nor mother had  
smiled.

One uncle their place in her life had supplied,  
And their place in her heart: she had grown at  
his side,

And under his roof-tree, and in his regard,  
From childhood to girlhood.

This fair orphan ward  
Seem'd the sole human creature that lived in  
the heart

Of that stern rigid man, or whose smile could  
impart

One ray of response to the eyes which, above  
Her fair infant forehead, look'd down with a  
love

That seem'd almost stern, so intense was its  
chill

Lofty stillness, like sunlight on some lonely  
hill

Which is colder and stiller than sunlight else-  
where.

Grass grew in the court-yard; the chambers  
were bare  
In that ancient mansion; when first the stern  
tread  
Of its owner awaken'd their echoes long dead:  
Bringing with him this infant (the child of a  
brother),  
Whom, dying, the hands of a desolate mother  
Had placed on his bosom. 'Twas said—right  
or wrong—  
That, in the lone mansion, left tenantless long  
To which, as a stranger, its lord now return'd,  
In years yet recall'd, through loud midnights  
had burn'd  
The light of wild orgies. Be that false or  
true,  
Slow and sad was the footstep which now wan-  
der'd rough  
Those desolate chambers; and calm and severe  
Was the life of their inmate.  
Men now saw appear  
Every morn at the mass that firm sorrowful  
face  
Which seem'd to lock up in a cold iron case  
Tears harden'd to crystal. Yet harsh if he  
were  
His severity seem'd to be trebly severe  
In the rule of his own rigid life, which, at least,  
Was benignant to others. The poor parish  
priest,  
Who lived on his largess, his piety praised.  
The peasant was fed, and the chapel was  
raised,  
And the cottage was built, by his liberal hand.

Yet he seem'd in the midst of his good deeds  
to stand

A lone, and unloved, and unlovable man.

There appear'd some inscrutable flow in the  
plan

Of his life, that love fail'd to pass over.

That child

Alone did not fear him, nor shrink from him;  
smiled

To his frown, and dispell'd it.

The sweet sportive elf

Seem'd the type of some joy lost, and miss'd,  
in himself.

Ever welcome he suffer'd her glad face to glide  
In no hours when to others his door was de-  
nied:

And many a time with a mute moody look

He would watch her at prattle and play, like a  
brook

Whose babble disturbs not the quietest spot,  
But soothes us because we need answer it  
not.

But few years had pass'd o'er that childhood  
before

A change came among them. A letter, which  
bore

Sudden consequence with it, one morning was  
placed

In the hands of the lord of the chateau. He  
paced

To and fro in his chamber a whole night alone  
After reading that letter. At dawn he was  
gone.

Weeks pass'd. When he came back again he  
return'd  
With a tall ancient dame, from whose lips the  
child learn'd  
That they were of the same race and name.  
With a face  
Sad and anxious, to this wither'd stock of the  
race  
He confided the orphan, and left them alone  
In the old lonely house.

In a few days 'twas known,  
To the angry surprise of half Paris, that one  
Of the chiefs of that party which, still clinging  
on  
To the banner that bears the white lilies of  
France,  
Will fight 'neath no other, nor yet for the  
chance  
Of restoring their own, had renounced the  
watch-word  
And the creed of his youth in unsheathing his  
sword,  
For a Fatherland father'd no more (such is  
fate!)  
By legitimate parents.

And meanwhile elate  
And in nowise disturbed by what Paris might  
say,  
The new soldier thus wrote to a friend far  
away:—  
“To the life of inaction farewell! After all,  
Creeds the oldest may crumble, and dynasties  
fall,  
But the sole grand Legitimacy will endure,

In whatever makes death noble, life strong and  
pure.

Freedom! action! . . . the desert to breathe in  
—the lance

Of the Arab to follow! I go, Vive la France!"

Few and rare were the meetings henceforth, as  
years fled,

'Twixt the child and the soldier. The two  
women led

Lone lives in the lone house. Meanwhile the  
child grew

Into girlhood; and, like a sunbeam, sliding  
through

Her green quiet years, changed by gentle de-  
grees

To the loveliest vision of youth a youth sees

In his loveliest fancies: as pure as a pearl,

And as perfect: a noble and innocent girl,

With eighteen summers dissolved in the light

Of her lovely and lovable eyes, soft and bright!

Then her guardian wrote to the dame, . . .

“Let Constance

Go with you to Paris. I trust that in France

I may be ere the close of the year. I confide

My life's treasure to you. Let her see, at your

side,

The world which we live in.”

To Paris then came

Constance to abide with that old stately dame

In that old stately Faubourg.

The young Englishman

Thus met her. 'Twas there their acquaintance

began,



There it closed. That old miracle—Love-at-  
 first-sight  
 Needs no explanations. The heart reads aright  
 Its destiny sometimes. His love neither chid-  
 den  
 Nor check'd, the young soldier was graciously  
 bidden  
 An habitual guest to that house by the dame.  
 His own candid graces, the world-honor'd  
 name  
 Of his father (in him not dishonor'd) were both  
 Fair titles to favor. His love, nothing loath,  
 The old lady observed, was return'd by Con-  
 stance.  
 And as the child's uncle his absence from  
 France  
 Yet prolong'd, she (thus easing long self-grat-  
 ulation)  
 Wrote to him a lengthen'd and moving narra-  
 tion  
 Of the graces and gifts of the young English  
 wooer:  
 His father's fair fame; the boy's deference to  
 her;  
 His love for Constance,—unaffected, sincere;  
 And the girl's love for him, read by her in  
 those clear  
 Limpid eyes; then the pleasure with which she  
 awaited  
 Her cousin's approval of all she had stated.  
 At length from that cousin an answer there  
 came,  
 Brief, stern; such as stunn'd and astonish'd  
 the dame.

"Let Constance leave Paris with you on the  
 day  
 You receive this. Until my return she may  
 stay  
 At her convent awhile. If my niece wishes  
 ever  
 To behold me again, understand, she will never  
 Wed that man.  
 "You have broken faith with me. Farewell!"

No appeal from that sentence.

It needs not to tell
 The tears of Constance, nor the grief of her  
 lover:  
 The dream they had laid out their lives in was  
 over.  
 Bravely strove the young soldier to look in the  
 face  
 Of a life, where invisible hands seemed to trace  
 O'er the threshold, these words . . . "Hope  
 no more!"

Unreturn'd
 Had his love been, the strong manful heart  
 would have spurn'd  
 That weakness which suffers a woman to lie  
 At the roots of man's life, like a canker, and  
 dry,  
 And wither the sap of life's purpose. But  
 there  
 Lay the bitterer part of the pain! Could he  
 dare  
 To forget he was loved? that he grieved not  
 alone?  
 Recording a love that drew sorrow upon

The woman he loved, for himself dare he seek  
 Surcease to that sorrow, which thus held him  
     weak,  
 Beat him down, and destroy'd him?  
                     News reach'd him, indeed,  
 Through a comrade, who brought him a letter  
     to read  
 From the dame who had care of Constance (it  
     was one  
 To whom, when at Paris, the boy had been  
     known,  
 A Frenchman, and friend of the Faubourg),  
     which said  
 That Constance, although never a murmur be-  
     tray'd  
 What she suffer'd, in silence grew paler each  
     day,  
 And seem'd visibly drooping and dying away.  
 It was then he sought death.

## XVII.

                    Thus the tale ends. 'Twas told  
 With such broken, passionate words, as unfold,  
 In glimpses alone, a coil'd grief. Through  
     each pause  
 Of its fitful recital, in raw gusty flaws,  
 The rain shook the canvas, unheeded; aloof,  
 And unheeded, the night-wind around the tent-  
     roof  
 At intervals wirbled. And when all was said,  
 The sick man, exhausted, droop'd backward  
     his head,  
 And fell into a feverish slumber.

                                    Long while

Sat the Sœur Seraphine, in deep thought. The  
 still smile  
 That was wont, angel-wise, to inhabit her face  
 And make it like heaven, was fled from its  
 place  
 In her eyes, on her lips; and a deep sadness  
 there  
 Seem'd to darken the lines of long sorrow and  
 care,  
 As low to herself she sigh'd . . .  
 "Hath it, Eugene,  
 Been so long, then, the struggle? . . . and yet,  
 all in vain!  
 Nay, not all in vain! Shall the world gain a  
 man,  
 And yet heaven lose a soul? Have I done all  
 I can?  
 Soul to soul, did he say? Soul to soul, be it so!  
 And then—soul of mine, whither? whither?"

## XVIII.

Large, slow,  
 Silent tears in those deep eyes ascended, and  
 fell.  
 "Here, at least, I have fail'd not" . . . she  
 mused . . . "this is well!"  
 She drew from her bosom two letters.  
 In one,  
 A mother's heart, wild with alarm for her son,  
 Breathed bitterly forth its despairing appeal.  
 "The pledge of a love owed to thee, O Lucile!  
 The hope of a home saved by thee—of a heart  
 Which hath never since then (thrice endear'd  
 as thou art!)"

Ceased to bless thee, to pray for thee, save!

. . . save my son!

And if not" . . . the letter went brokenly on,  
 "Heaven help us!"

Then follow'd, from Alfred, a few  
 Blotted heart-broken pages. He mournfully  
 drew

With pathos the picture of that earnest youth,  
 So unlike his own; how in beauty and truth  
 He had nurtured that nature, so simple and  
 brave!

And how he had striven his son's youth to save  
 From the errors so sadly redeem'd in his own,  
 And so deeply repented: how thus, in that son,  
 In whose youth he had garner'd his age, he  
 had seem'd

To be bless'd by a pledge that the past was re-  
 deem'd

And forgiven. He bitterly went on to speak  
 Of the boy's baffled love; in which fate seem'd  
 to break

Unawares on his dreams with retributive pain,  
 And the ghosts of the past rose to scourge back  
 again

The hopes of the future. To sue for consent  
 Pride forbade: and the hope his old foe might  
 relent

Experience rejected . . . "My life for the boy's!"  
 (He exclaim'd); "for I die with my son, if he  
 dies!

Lucile! Heaven bless you for all you have  
 done!

Save him, save him, Lucile! save my son! save  
 my son!"

## XIX.

"Ay!" murmur'd the Sœur Seraphine . . .  
 "heart to heart!  
 There, at least, I have fail'd not! Fulfill'd is  
 my part?  
 Accomplish'd my mission? One act crowns  
 the whole.  
 Do I linger? Nay, be it so, then! . . . Soul to  
 soul!"  
 She knelt down and pray'd. Still the boy  
 slumber'd on,  
 Dawn broke. The pale nun from the bedside  
 was gone.

## XX.

Meanwhile, 'mid his aides-de-camp, busily bent  
 O'er the daily reports, in his well-order'd tent  
 There sits a French General—bronzed by the  
 sun  
 And sear'd by the sands of Algeria. One  
 Who forth from the wars of the wild Kabylee  
 Had strangely and rapidly risen to be  
 The idol, the darling, the dream and the  
 star  
 Of the younger French chivalry; daring in  
 war,  
 And wary in council. He enter'd, indeed,  
 Late in life (and discarding his Bourbonite  
 creed)  
 The Army of France: and had risen, in part  
 From a singular aptitude proved for the art  
 Of that wild desert warfare of ambush, sur-  
 prise,

And stratagem, which to the French camp sup-  
 plies  
 Its subtlest intelligence; partly from chance;  
 Partly, too, from a name and position which  
 France  
 Was proud to put forward; but mainly, in  
 fact,  
 From the prudence to plan, and the daring to  
 act,  
 In frequent emergencies startlingly shown  
 To the rank which he now held,—intrepidly  
 won  
 With many a wound, trench'd in many a scar,  
 From fierce Milianah and Sidi-Sakhdar.

## XXI.

All within, and without, that warm tent seems  
 to bear  
 Smiling token of provident order and care.  
 All about, a well-fed, well-clad soldiery stands  
 In groups round the music of mirth-breathing  
 bands.  
 In and out of the tent, all day long, to and fro,  
 The messengers come and the messengers go,  
 Upon missions of mercy, or errands of toil:  
 To report how the sapper contends with the  
 soil  
 In the terrible trench, how the sick man is  
 faring  
 In the hospital tent: and, combining, compar-  
 ing,  
 Constructing, within moves the brain of one  
 man,  
 Moving all.

He is bending his brow o'er some plan  
For the hospital service, wise, skillful, hu-  
mane.

The officer standing behind him is fain  
To refer to the angel solicitous cares  
Of the Sisters of Charity: one he declares  
To be known through the camp as a seraph of  
grace;

He has seen, all have seen her indeed, in each  
place

Where suffering is seen, silent, active—the  
Sœur . . .

Sœur . . . how do they call her?

“Ay, truly, of her  
I have heard much,” the General, musing, re-  
plies;

“And we owe her already (unless rumor lies)  
The lives of not few of our bravest. You  
mean . . .

Ay, how do they call her? . . . the—Sœur—  
Seraphine

(Is it not so?). I rarely forget names once  
heard.

“Yes; the Sœur Seraphine. Her I meant.”

“On my word,  
I have much wish'd to see her. I fancy I trace,  
In some facts traced to her, something more  
than the grace

Of an angel; I mean an acute human mind,  
Ingenious, constructive, intelligent. Find,  
And, if possible, let her come to me. We shall,  
I think, aid each other.”

“*Oui, mon General:*  
I believe she has lately obtained the permission



To tend some sick man in the Second Division  
Of our Ally: they say a relation."

"Ay, so?

A relation?"

" 'Tis said so."

"The name do you know?"

"*Non, mon General.*"

While they spoke yet, there went  
A murmur and stir round the door of the tent.  
"A Sister of Charity craves, in a case  
Of urgent and serious importance, the grace  
Of brief private speech with the General  
there.

Will the General speak with her?"

"Bid her declare

Her mission."

"She will not. She craves to be seen  
And be heard."

"Well, her name, then?"

"The Sœur Seraphine."

"Clear the tent. She may enter."

XXII.

The tent has been clear'd,  
The chieftain stroked moodily somewhat his  
beard,  
A sable long silver'd: and press'd down his  
brow  
On his hand, heavy vein'd. All his counte-  
nance, now  
Unwitness'd, at once fell dejected, and dreary,  
As a curtain let fall by a hand that's grown  
weary,

Into puckers and folds. From his lips, unre-  
 press'd,  
 Steals th' impatient quick sigh which reveals  
 in man's breast  
 A conflict conceal'd, an experience at strife  
 With itself,—the vex'd heart's passing protest  
 on life.  
 He turn'd to his papers. He heard the light  
 tread  
 Of a faint foot behind him: and, lifting his  
 head,  
 Said, "Sit, Holy Sister! your worth is well  
 known  
 To the hearts of our soldiers; nor less to my  
 own.  
 I have much wish'd to see you. I owe you  
 some thanks:  
 In the name of all those you have saved to our  
 ranks  
 I record them. Sit! Now, then, your mis-  
 sion?"

The nun

Paused silent. The General eyed her anon  
 More keenly. His aspect grew troubled. A  
 change  
 Darken'd over his features. He mutter'd . . .  
 "Strange! strange!  
 Any face should so strongly remind me of her!  
 Fool! again the delirium, the dream! does it  
 stir?  
 Does it move as of old? Psha!  
 "Sit, Sister! I wait  
 Your answer, my time halts but hurriedly.  
 State

The cause why you seek me?"

"The cause? ay, the cause!"

She vaguely repeated. Then, after a pause,—  
As one who, awaked unawares, would put back  
The sleep that forever returns in the track  
Of dreams which, though scared and dispersed,  
not the less

Settle back to faint eyelids that yield 'neath  
their stress,

Like doves to a penthouse,—a movement she  
made,

Less toward him than away from herself;  
droop'd her head

And folded her hands on her bosom; long,  
spare,

Fatigued, mournful hands! Not a stream of  
stray hair

Escaped her pale bands; scarce more pale than  
the face

Which they bound and lock'd up in a rigid  
white case.

She fix'd her eyes on him. There crept a  
vague awe

O'er his sense, such as ghosts cast

"Eugene de Luvois,

The cause which recalls me again to your  
side,

Is a promise that rests unfulfill'd," she replied.

"I come to fulfill it."

He sprang from the place

Where he sat, pressed his hand, as in doubt,  
o'er his face;

And, cautiously feeling each step o'er the  
ground



And sad was the gaze which the Sœur Sera-  
phine  
Held on him. She spoke.

## XXIII.

As some minstrel may fling,  
Preluding the music yet music in each string,  
A swift hand athwart the blush'd heart of the  
whole,  
Seeking which note most fitly must first move  
the soul;  
And, leaving untroubled the deep chords  
below,  
Move pathetic in numbers remote;—even so  
The voice which was moving the heart of that  
man  
Far away from its yet voiceless purpose began,  
Far away in the pathos remote of the past;  
Until, through her words, rose before him, at  
last,  
Bright and dark in their beauty, the hopes that  
were gone  
Unaccomplish'd from life.

He was mute.

## XXIV.

She went on..  
And still further down the dim past did she  
lead  
Each yielding remembrance, far, far off, to  
feed  
'Mid the pastures of youth, in the twilight of  
hope,  
And the valleys of boyhood, the fresh-flower'd  
slope

Of life's dawning land!

'Tis the heart of a boy,  
With its indistinct, passionate prescience of  
joy!

The unproved desire—the unaim'd aspiration—  
The deep conscious life that forestalls consum-  
mation;

With ever a fitting delight—one arm's length  
In advance of the august inward impulse

The strength  
Of the spirit which troubles the seed in the  
sand

With the birth of the palm-tree! Let ages  
expand

The glorious creature! The ages lie shut  
(Safe, see!) in the seed, at time's signal to put  
Forth their beauty and power, leaf by leaf,  
layer on layer,

Till the palm strikes the sun, and stands broad  
in blue air.

So the palm in the palm-seed! so, slowly—so  
wrought

Year by year unperceived, hope on hope,  
thought by thought,

Trace the growth of the man from its germ in  
the boy.

Ah, but Nature, that nurtures, may also  
destroy!

Charm the wind and the sun, lest some chance  
intervene!

While the leaf's in the bud, while the stem's  
in the green,

A light bird bends the branch, a light breeze  
breaks the bough,

Which, if spared by the light breeze, the light  
bird, may grow  
To baffle the tempest, and rock the high nest,  
And take both the bird and the breeze to its  
breast.

Shall we save a whole forest in sparing one  
seed?

Save the man in the boy? in the thought save  
the deed?

Let the whirlwind uproot the grown tree, if it  
can!

Save the seed from the north wind. So let  
the grown man

Face our fate. Spare the man-seed in youth.  
He was dumb.

She went one step further.

## xxv.

Lo! manhood is come.

And love, the wild song-bird, hath flown to the  
tree,

And the whirlwind comes after. Now prove  
we, and see:

What shade from the leaf? what support from  
the branch?

Spreads the leaf broad and fair? holds the  
bough strong and stanch?

There, he saw himself—dark, as he stood on  
that night,

The last when they met and they parted: a  
sight

For heaven to mourn o'er, for hell to rejoice!  
An ineffable tenderness troubled her voice:

It grew weak, and a sigh broke it through.

Then he said  
 (Never looking at her, never lifting his head,  
 As though, at his feet, there lay visibly hurl'd  
 Those fragments), "It was not a love, 'twas a  
 world,  
 'Twas a life that lay ruin'd, Lucile!"

## XXVI.

She went on:  
 "So be it! Perish Babel, arise Babylon!  
 From ruins like these rise the fanes that shall  
 last,  
 And to build up the future heaven shatters the  
 past."  
 "Ay," he moodily murmur'd, "and who cares  
 to scan  
 The heart's perish'd world gains a man?  
 From the past to the present, though late, I  
 appeal;  
 To the nun Seraphine, from the woman  
 Lucile!"

## XXVII.

Lucile! . . . the old name—the old self!  
 silenced long:  
 Heard once more! felt once more!  
 As some soul to the throng  
 Of invisible spirits admitted, baptized  
 By death to a new name and nature—surprised  
 'Mid the songs of the seraphs, hears faintly,  
 and far,  
 Some voice from the earth, left below a dim  
 star,  
 Calling to her forlornly; and sadd'ning the  
 psalms



Of the angels, and piercing the Paradise  
 palms!)  
 The name borne 'mid earthly beloveds on  
 earth  
 Sigh'd above some lone grave in the land of  
 her birth;—  
 So that one word . . . Lucile! . . . stirr'd  
 the Sœur Seraphine,  
 For a moment. Anon she resumed her serene  
 And concentrated calm.  
 “Let the Nun, then, retrace  
 The life of the soldier!” . . . she said, with a  
 face  
 That glow'd, gladdening her words.  
 “To the present I come:  
 Leave the Past!”  
 There her voice rose, and seem'd as  
 when some  
 Pale Priestess proclaims from her temple the  
 praise  
 Of her hero whose brows she is crowning with  
 bays.  
 Step by step did she follow his path from the  
 place  
 Where their two paths diverged. Year by year  
 did she trace  
 (Familiar with all) his, the soldier's existence.  
 Her words were of trial, endurance, resistance;  
 Of the leaguer around this besieged world of  
 ours:  
 And the same sentinels that ascend the same  
 towers  
 And report the same foes, the same fears, the  
 same strife,

Waged alike to the limits of each human life.  
 She went on to speak of the lone moody lord,  
 Shut up in his lone moody halls: every word  
 Held the weight of a tear: she recorded the  
     good

He had patiently wrought through a whole  
     neighborhood;

And the blessing that lived on the lips of the  
     poor,

By the peasant's hearthstone, or the cottager's  
     door.

There she paused: and her accents seem'd  
     dipp'd in the hue

Of his own somber heart, as the picture she  
     drew

Of the poor, proud, sad spirit, rejecting love's  
     wages,

Yet working love's work; reading backwards  
     life's pages

For penance; and stubbornly, many a time,  
 Both missing the moral, and marring the  
     rhyme.

Then she spoke of the soldier! . . . the man's  
     work and fame,

The pride of a nation, a world's just acclaim,  
 Life's inward approval!

xxviii.

Her voice reach'd his heart,  
 And sank lower. She spoke of herself: how,  
     apart

And unseen,—far away,—she had watch'd,  
     year by year,

With how many a blessing, how many a tear,

And how many a prayer, every stage in the  
strife:

Guess'd the thought in the deed: traced the  
love in the life:

Bless'd the man in the man's work!

“Thy work . . . oh, not mine!  
Thine, Lucile!” . . . he exclaim'd . . . “all  
the worth of it thine

If worth there be in it!”

Her answer convey'd  
His reward, and her own: joy that cannot be  
said

Alone by the voice . . . eyes—face—spoke  
silently:

All the woman, one grateful emotion!

And she  
A poor Sister of Charity! hers a life spent  
In one silent effort for others! . . .

She bent  
Her divine face above him, and fill'd up his  
heart

With the look that glow'd from it.

Then slow, with soft art,  
Fix'd her aim, and moved to it.

XXIX.

He, the soldier humane,  
He, the hero; whose heart hid in glory the  
pain

Of a youth disappointed; whose life had made  
known

The value of man's life! . . . that youth over-  
thrown

And retrieved, had it left him no pity for youth

In another? his own life of strenuous truth  
 Accomplish'd in act, had it taught him no care  
 For the life of another? . . . oh no! every-  
 where

In the camp which she moved through, she  
 came face to face

With some noble token, some generous trace  
 Of his active humanity . . .

“Well,” he replied,  
 “If it be so?”

“I come from the solemn bedside  
 Of a man that is dying,” she said. “While we  
 speak,  
 A life is in jeopardy.”

“Quick then! you seek  
 Aid or medicine, or what?”

“ ’Tis not needed,” she said  
 “Medicine? yes, for the mind! ’Tis a heart that  
 needs aid!

You, Eugene de Luvois, you (and you only)  
 can

Save the life of this man. Will you save it?”

“What man?  
 How? . . . where? . . . can you ask?”

She went rapidly on  
 To her object in brief vivid words . . . The  
 young son

Of Matilda and Alfred—the boy lying there  
 Half a mile from that tent door—the father’s  
 despair,

The mother’s deep anguish—the pride of the  
 boy

In the father—the father’s one hope and one  
 joy

In the son:—the son now—wounded, dying!  
She told  
Of the father's stern struggle with life: the  
boy's bold,  
Pure, and beautiful nature: the fair life before  
him  
If that life were but spared . . . yet a word  
might restore him!  
The boy's broken love for the niece of Eugene!  
Its pathos: the girl's love for him; how, half  
slain  
In his tent she had found him: won from him  
the tale;  
Sought to nurse back his life; found her efforts  
still fail;  
Beaten back by a love that was stronger than  
life;  
Of how bravely till then he had stood in that  
strife  
Wherein England and France in their best  
blood, at last,  
Had bathed from remembrance the wounds of  
the past.  
And shall nations be nobler than men? Are  
not great  
Men the models of nations? For what is a state  
But the many's confused imitation of one?  
Shall he, the fair hero of France, on the son  
Of his ally seek vengeance, destroying per-  
chance  
An innocent life,—here, when England and  
France  
Have forgiven the sins of their fathers of  
yore,

And baptized a new hope in their sons' recent  
gore?

She went on to tell how the boy had clung still  
To life, for the sake of life's uses, until  
From his weak hands the strong effort dropp'd,  
stricken down

By the news that the heart of Constance, lies  
his own,

Was breaking beneath . . .

But there "Hold!" he exclaim'd,  
Interrupting, "forbear!" . . . his whole face  
was inflamed

With the heart's swarthy thunder which yet,  
while she spoke,

Had been gathering silent—at last the storm  
broke

In grief or in wrath . . .

"'Tis to him, then," he cried, . . .  
Checking suddenly short the tumultuous  
stride,

"That I owe these late greetings—for him you  
are here—

For his sake you seek me—for him, it is clear,  
You have deign'd at the last to bethink you  
again

Of this long forgotten existence!"

"Eugene!"

"Ha! fool that I was!" . . . he went on, . . .

"and just now,

While you spoke yet, my heart was beginning  
to grow

Almost boyish again, almost sure of one friend!  
Yet this was the meaning of all—this the end!  
Be it so! There's a sort of slow justice (admit!).

In this—that the word that man's finger hath  
writ

In fire on my heart, I return him at last.

Let him learn that word—Never!"

"Ah, still to the past  
Must the present be vassal?" she said. "In  
the hour

We last parted I urged you to put forth the  
power

Which I felt to be yours, in the conquest of life.

Yours, the promise to strive: mine,—to watch  
o'er the strife.

I foresaw you would conquer; you have con-  
quer'd much,

Much, indeed, that is noble! I hail it as such,

And am here to record and applaud it. I saw

Not the less in your nature, Eugene de Luvois,

One peril—one point where I feared you would  
fail

To subdue that worst foe which a man can as-  
sail,—

Himself: and I promised that, if I should see

My champion once falter, or bend the brave  
knee,

That moment would bring me again to his side.

That moment is come! for that peril was pride,

And you falter. I plead for yourself, and one  
another,

For that gentle child without father or mother.

To whom you are both. I plead, soldier of  
France,

For your own nobler nature—and plead for  
Constance!"

At the sound of that name he averted his head.

“Constance! . . . Ay, she enter’d my lone  
life” (he said,)

“When its sun was long set; and hung over its  
night

Her own starry childhood. I have but that  
light,

In the midst of much darkness! Who names  
me but she

With titles of love? and what rests there for me  
In the silence of age save the voice of that  
child?

The child of my own better life, undefiled!

My creature, carved out of my heart of hearts!”

“Say,”

Said the Sœur Seraphine—“are you able to lay  
Your hand as a knight on your heart as a man  
And swear that, whatever may happen, you can  
Feel assured for the life you thus cherish?”

“How so?”

He looked up. “If the boy should die thus?”

“Yes, I know

What your look would imply . . . this sleek  
stranger forsooth!

Because on his cheek was the red rose of youth  
The heart of my niece must break for it!”

She cried.

“Nay, but hear me yet further!”

With slow heavy stride,

Unheeding her words, he was pacing the tent.

He was muttering low to himself as he went.

“Ay, these young things lie safe in our heart  
just so long

As their wings are in growing; and when these  
are strong



They break it, and farewell! the bird flies!" . . .

The nun

Laid her hand on the soldier, and murmur'd,

    "The sun  
Is descending, life fleets while we talk thus!  
    on, yet

Let this day upon one final victory set,  
And complete a life's conquest!"

He said, "Understand!

If Constance wed the son of this man, by whose  
    hand

My heart hath been robb'd, she is lost to my  
    life!

Can her home be my home? Can I claim in the  
    wife

Of that man's son the child of my age? At her  
    side

Shall he stand on my hearth? Shall I sue to  
    the bride

Of . . . enough!

"Ah, and you immemorial halls  
Of my Norman forefathers, whose shadow yet  
    falls

On my fancy, and fuses hope, memory, past,  
Present,—all, in one silence! old trees to the  
    blast

Of the North sea repeating the tale of old days,  
Nevermore, nevermore in the wild bosky ways  
Shall I hear through your umbrage ancestral  
    the wind

Prophecy as of yore, when it shook the deep  
    mind

Of my boyhood, with whispers from out the far  
    years

Of love, fame, the raptures life cools down with  
tears!

Henceforth shall the tread of a Vargrave alone  
Rouse your echoes?"

“O think not,” she said, “of the son  
Of the man whom unjustly you hate; only  
think

Of this young human creature, that cries from  
the brink

Of a grave to your mercy!

“Recall your own words  
(Words my memory mournfully ever records!)  
How with love may be wreck'd a whole life!  
then, Eugene,

Look with me (stil' those words in our ears!)  
once again

At this young soldier sinking from life here—  
dragg'd down

By the weight of the love in his heart: no re-  
nown,

No fame comforts him! nations shout not  
above

The lone grave down to which he is bearing the  
love

Which life has rejected! Will you stand apart?  
You, with such a love's memory deep in your  
heart,

You the hero, whose life hath perchance been  
led on

Through the deeds it hath wrought to the fame  
it hath won,

By recalling the visions and dreams of a youth,  
Such as lies at your door now: who have but,  
in truth.

To stretch forth a hand, to speak only one  
word

And by that work you rescue a life!"

He was stirr'd.

Still he sought to put from him the cup; bow'd  
his face

On his hand; and anon, as though wishing to  
chase

With one angry gesture his own thoughts aside,  
He sprang up, brush'd past her, and bitterly  
cried,

"No!—Constance wed a Vargrave!—I cannot  
consent!"

Then up rose the Sœur Seraphine.

The low tent,

In her sudden uprising, seem'd dwarf'd by the  
height

From which those imperial eyes pour'd the  
light

Of their deep silent sadness upon him.

No wonder

He felt, as it were, his own stature shrink un-  
der

The compulsion of that grave regard! For  
between

The Duc de Luvois and the Sœur Seraphine  
At that moment there rose all the height of one  
soul

O'er another; she look'd down on him from  
the whole

Lonely length of a life. There were sad nights  
and days,

There were long months and years in that  
heart-searching gaze;

And her voice, when she spoke, with sharp  
 pathos thrill'd through  
 And transfix'd him.

“Eugene de Luvois, but for you,  
 I might have been now—not this wandering  
 nun,

But a mother, a wife—pleading, not for the son  
 Of another, but blessing some child of my own,  
 His,—the man's that I once loved! . . . Hush!  
 that which is done

I regret not. I breathe no reproaches. That's  
 best

Which God sends. 'Twas His will: it is mine.

And the rest

Of that riddle I will not look back to. He  
 reads

In your heart—He that judges of all thoughts  
 and deeds.

With eyes, mine forestall not! This only I say:  
 You have not the right (read it, you, as you  
 may!)

To say . . . ‘I am the wrong'd.’ ”

“Have I wrong'd thee?—wrong'd thee!”  
 He falter'd, “Lucile, ah, Lucile!”

“Nay, not me,”

She murmur'd, “but man! The lone nun  
 standing here

Has no claim upon earth, and is pass'd from  
 the sphere

Of earth's wrongs and earth's reparations. But  
 she,

The dead woman, Lucile, she whose grave is in  
 me,

Demands from her grave reparation to man,,

Reparation to God. Heed, O heed, while you  
 can  
 This voice from the grave!"  
 "Hush!" he moan'd, "I obey  
 The Sœur Seraphine. There, Lucile! let this  
 pay  
 Every debt that is due to that grave. Now lead  
 on:  
 I follow you Sœur Seraphine! . . . To the  
 son  
 Of Lord Alfred Vargrave . . . And then," . . .  
 As he spoke  
 He lifted the tent-door, and down the dun  
 smoke  
 Pointed out the dark bastions, with batteries  
 crown'd,  
 Of the city beneath them  
 "Then, there, underground,  
 And *valeté et plaudite*, soon as may be!  
 Let the old tree go down to the earth—the old  
 tree,  
 With the worm at its heart! Lay the ax to  
 the root!  
 Who will miss the old stump, so we save the  
 young shoot?  
 A Vargrave! . . . this pays all . . . Lead  
 on! . . . In the seed  
 Save the forest! . . .  
 I follow . . . forth, forth! where you lead.

xxx.

The day was declining; a day sick and damp.  
 In a bland ghostly glare shone the bleak  
 ghostly camp

Of the English. Alone in his dim, spectral  
 tent  
 (Himself the wan specter of youth), with eyes  
 bent  
 On the daylight departing, the sick man was  
 sitting  
 Upon his low pallet. These thoughts, vaguely  
 flitting,  
 Cross'd the silence between him and death,  
 which seem'd near,  
 —“Pain o'erreaches itself, so is balk'd! else  
 how bear  
 This intense and intolerable solitude,  
 With its eye on my heart and its hand on my  
 blood?  
 Pulse by pulse! Day goes down: yet she  
 comes not again.  
 Other suffering, doubtless, where hope is more  
 plain,  
 Claims her elsewhere. I die, strange! and  
 scarcely feel sad.  
 Oh, to think of Constance thus, and not to go  
 mad!  
 But Death, it would seem, dulls the sense to  
 his own  
 Dull doings . . .”

xxxI.

Between those sick eyes and the sun  
 A shadow fell thwart.

xxxII.

'Tis the pale nun once more!  
 But who stands at her side, mute and dark in  
 the door?

How oft had he watch'd through the glory and  
gloom  
Of the battle, with long, longing looks that  
dim plume  
Which now (one stray sunbeam upon it) shook,  
stoop'd  
To where the tent-curtain, dividing, was  
loop'd!  
How that stern face had haunted and hover'd  
about  
The dreams it still scared! through what fond  
fear and doubt  
Had the boy yearn'd in heart to the hero!  
(What's like  
A boy's love for some famous man?) . . . Oh,  
to strike  
A wild path through the battle, down striking  
perchance  
Some rash foeman too near the great soldier  
of France,  
And so fall in his glorious regard! . . . Oft,  
how oft  
His heart flash'd this hope out, whilst watch-  
ing aloft  
The dim battle that plume dance and dart—  
never seen  
So near till this moment! how eager to glean  
Every word, dropp'd through the camp-babble  
in praise  
Of his hero—each tale of old venturous days  
In the desert! And now . . . could he speak  
out his heart  
Face to face with that man ere he died!

## xxxiii.

With a start

The sick soldier sprang up: the blood sprang  
 up in him,  
 To his throat, and o'erthrew him: he reel'd  
 back: a dim  
 Sanguine haze fill'd his eyes; in his ears rose  
 the din  
 And rush, as of cataracts loosen'd within,  
 Through which he saw faintly, and heard, the  
 pale nun  
 (Looking larger than life, where she stood in  
 the sun)  
 Point to him and murmur, "Behold!" Then  
 that plume  
 Seem'd to wave like a fire, and fade off in the  
 gloom  
 Which momentarily put out the world.

## xxxiv.

To his side

Moved the man the boy dreaded yet loved . . .  
 "Ah!" . . . he sigh'd,  
 "The smooth brow, the fair Vargrave face!  
 and those eyes,  
 All the mother's! The old things again!  
 "Do not rise.  
 You suffer, young man?"

THE BOY.

Sir, I die.

THE DUKE.

Not so young!



## THE BOY.

So young? yes: and yet I have tangled among  
The fray'd warp and woof of this brief life of  
mine

Other lives than my own. Could my death  
but untwine

The vext skein . . . but it will not. Yes,  
Duke, young—so young!

And I knew you not? yet I have done you a  
wrong

Irreparable! . . . late, too late to repair.

If I knew any means . . . but I know none!

. . . I swear,

If this broken fraction of time could extend

Into infinite lives of atonement, no end

Would seem too remote for my grief (could  
that be!)

To include it! Not too late, however, for me

To entreat; is it too late for you to forgive?

## THE DUKE.

You wrong—my forgiveness—explain.

## THE BOY.

Could I live!

Such a very few hours left to life, yet I shrink,  
I falter . . . Yes, Duke, your forgiveness I  
think

Should free my soul hence.

Ah! you could not surmise

That a boy's beating heart, burning thoughts,  
longing eyes

Were following you evermore (heeded not!)

While the battle was flowing between us: nor  
 what

Eager, dubious footsteps at nightfall oft went  
 With the wind and the rain, round and round  
 your blind tent,

Persistent and wild as the wind and the rain,  
 Unnoticed as these, weak as these, and as vain!  
 Oh, how obdurate then look'd your tent! The  
 waste air

Grew stern at the gleam which said . . . "Off!  
 he is there!"

I know not what merciful mystery now  
 Brings you here, whence the man whom you  
 see lying low

Other footsteps (not those!) must soon bear to  
 the grave.

But death is at hand, and the few words I  
 have

Yet to speak, I must speak them at once.

Duke, I swear,  
 As I lie here, (Death's angel too close not to  
 hear!)

That I meant not this wrong to you. Duc de  
 Luvois,

I loved your niece—loved? why, I love her! I  
 saw,

And, seeing, how could I but love her? I  
 seem'd

Born to love her. Alas, were that all! Had I  
 dream'd

Of this love's cruel consequence as it rests now  
 Ever fearfully present before me, I vow

That the secret, unknown, had gone down to  
 the tomb

Into which I descend . . . Oh, why, whilst  
     there was room  
 In life left for warning, had no one the heart  
 To warn me? Had any one whisper'd . . .  
     "Depart!"  
 To the hope the whole world seem'd in league  
     then to nurse!  
 Had any one hinted . . . "Beware of the curse  
 Which is coming!" There was not a voice  
     raised to tell,  
 Not a hand moved to warn from the blow ere  
     it fell,  
 And then . . . then the blow fell on both!  
     This is why  
 I implore you to pardon that great injury  
 Wrought on her, and, through her, wrought on  
     you, Heaven knows  
 How unwittingly!

THE DUKE.

Ah! . . . and, young soldier, suppose  
 That I came here to seek, not grant, pardon?—

THE BOY.

Of whom?

THE DUKE.

Of yourself.

THE BOY.

Duke, I bear in my heart to the tomb  
 No boyish resentment; not one lonely thought  
 That honors you not. In all this there is  
     naught.

'Tis for me to forgive.

Every glorious act

Of your great life starts forward, an eloquent  
 fact,  
 To confirm in my boy's heart its faith in your  
 own.  
 And have I not hoarded, to ponder upon,  
 A hundred great acts from your life? Nay,  
 all these,  
 Were they so many lying and false witnesses,  
 Does there rest not one voice, which was never  
 untrue?  
 I believe in Constance, Duke, as she does in  
 you!  
 In this great world around us, wherever we  
 turn,  
 Some grief irremediable we discern;  
 And yet—there sits God, calm in Heaven  
 above!  
 Do we trust one whit less in His justice or  
 love?  
 I judge not.

THE DUKE.

Enough! Hear at last, then, the truth,  
 Your father and I—foes we were in our youth.  
 It matters not why. Yet thus much under-  
 stand:  
 The hope of my youth was sign'd out by his  
 hand.  
 I was not of those whom the buffets of fate  
 Tame and teach: and my heart buried slain  
 love in hate.  
 If your own frank young heart, yet uncon-  
 scious of all  
 Which turns the heart's blood in its springtide  
 to gall,

And unable to guess even aught that the fur-  
row  
Across these gray brows hides of sin or of sor-  
row,  
Comprehend not the evil and grief of my life,  
'Twill at least comprehend how intense was  
the strife  
Which is closed in this act of atonement, where-  
by  
I seek in the son of my youth's enemy  
The friend of my age. Let the present release  
Here acquitted the past! In the name of my  
niece,  
Whom for my life in yours as a hostage I give,  
Are you great enough, boy, to forgive me,—  
and live?  
Whilst he spoke thus, a doubtful tumultuous  
joy  
Chased its fleeting effects o'er the face of the  
boy:  
As when some stormy moon, in a long cloud  
confined,  
Struggles outward through shadows, the vary-  
ing wind  
Alternates, and bursts, self-surprised, from her  
prison,  
So that joy grew clear in his face. He had  
risen  
To answer the Duke; but strength fail'd every  
limb;  
A strange, happy feebleness trembled through  
him.  
With a faint cry of rapturous wonder, he sank  
On the breast of the nun, who stood near.

“Yes, boy! thank

This guardian angel,” the Duke said. “I—  
 you,  
 We owe all to her. Crown her work. Live!  
 be true  
 To your young life’s fair promise, and live for  
 her sake!”

“Yes, Duke: I will live. I must live—live to  
 make  
 My whole life the answer you claim,” the boy  
 said,  
 “For joy does not kill!”

Back again the faint head

Declined on the nun’s gentle bosom. She saw  
 His lips quiver, and motion’d the Duke to  
 withdraw  
 And leave them a moment together.

He eyed

Them both with a wistful regard; turn’d, and  
 sigh’d,  
 And lifted the tent-door, and pass’d from the  
 tent.

## xxxv.

Like a furnace, the fervid, intense occident  
 From its hot seething levels a great glare  
 struck up  
 On the sick metal sky. And, as out of a cup  
 Some witch watches boiling wild portents arise,  
 Monstrous clouds, mass’d, misshapen, and  
 ting’d with strange dyes,  
 Hover’d over the red fume, and changed to  
 weird shapes  
 As of snakes, salamanders, efts, lizards, storks,  
 apes,

Chimeras, and hydras: whilst—ever the same  
 In the midst of all these (creatures fused by  
     his flame,  
 And changed by his influence!) changeless, as  
     when,  
 Ere he lit down to death generations of men  
 O'er that crude and ungainly creation, which  
     there  
 With wild shapes this cloud-world seem'd to  
     mimic in air,  
 The eye of Heaven's all-judging witness, he  
     shone,  
 And shall shine on the ages we reach not—the  
     sun!

## xxxvi.

Nature-posted her parable thus in the skies,  
 And the man's heart bore witness. Life's  
     vapors arise  
 And fall, pass and change, group themselves  
     and revolve  
 Round the great central life, which is Love:  
     these dissolve  
 And resume themselves, here assume beauty,  
     there terror;  
 And the phantasmagoria of infinite error,  
 And endless complexity, lasts but a while;  
 Life's self, the immortal, immutable smile  
 Of God, on the soul, in the deep heart of  
     Heaven  
 Lives changeless, unchanged: and our morn-  
     ing and even  
 Are earth's alternations, not Heaven's.

## XXXVII.

While he yet  
 Watch'd the skies, with this thought in his  
 heart; while he set  
 Thus unconsciously all his life forth in his  
 mind,  
 Summ'd it up, search'd it out, proved it vapor  
 and wind,  
 And embraced the new life which that hour  
 had reveal'd,—  
 Love's life, which earth's life had defaced and  
 conceal'd;  
 Lucile left the tent and stood by him.

Her tread  
 Aroused him; and, turning toward her, he  
 said:

“O Sœur Seraphine, are you happy?”

“Eugene,  
 What is happier than to have hoped not in  
 vain?”

She answer'd—“And you?”

“Yes.”

“You do not repent?”

“No.”

“Thank Heaven!” she murmur'd. He mus-  
 ingly bent

His looks on the sunset, and somewhat apart  
 Where he stood, sigh'd, as though to his inner-  
 most heart,

“O bless'd are they, amongst whom I was not,  
 Whose morning unclouded, without stain or  
 spot,

Predicts a pure evening; who, sunlike, in  
 light



Have traversed, unsullied, the world, and set  
bright!"

But she in response, "Mark yon ship far away,  
Asleep on the wave, in the last light of day,  
With all its hush'd thunders shut up! Would  
you know

A thought which came to me a few days ago,  
Whilst watching those ships? . . . When the  
great Ship of Life

Surviving, though shatter'd, the tumult and  
strife

Of earth's angry element,—mast broken short,  
Decks drench'd, bulwarks beaten—driven safe  
into port,

When the Pilot of Galilee, seen on the strand,  
Stretches over the waters a welcoming hand;  
When, heeding no longer the sea's baffled  
roar,

The mariner turns to his rest evermore;  
What will then be the answer the helmsman  
must give?

Will it be . . . 'Lo our log-book! Thus once  
did we live

In the zones of the South; thus we traversed  
the seas

Of the Orient; there dwelt with the Hesper-  
ides;

Thence follow'd the west wind; here, east-  
ward we turn'd;

The stars fail'd us there; just here land we dis-  
cern'd

On our lee; there the storm overtook us at last;  
That day went the bowsprit, the next day the  
mast;

There the mermen came round us, and there  
we saw bask

A siren? The Captain of Port will he ask  
Any one of such questions? I cannot think so!  
But . . . 'What is the last Bill of Health you  
can show?'

Not—How fared the soul through the trials  
she pass'd?

But—What is the state of that soul at the last?"  
"May it be so!" he sigh'd. "There the sun  
drops, behold!"

And indeed, whilst he spake all the purple and  
gold

In the west had turn'd ashen, save one fading  
strip

Of light that yet gleam'd from the dark nether  
lip

Of a long reef of cloud; and o'er sullen ravines  
And ridges the raw damps were hanging white  
screens

Of melancholy mist.

"*Nunc dimittis!*" she said.

"O God of the living! whilst yet 'mid the dead  
And the dying we stand here alive, and Thy  
days

Returning, admit space for prayer and for  
praise,

In both these confirm us!

"The helmsman, Eugene,  
Needs the compass to steer by. Pray always.

Again

We two part: each to work out Heaven's will:  
you, I trust,

In the world's ample witness; and I, as I must,

In secret and silence: you, love, fame, await;  
 Me, sorrow and sickness. We meet at one  
 gate

When all's over. The ways they are many  
 and wide,

And seldom are two ways the same. Side by  
 side

May we stand at the same little door when all's  
 done!

The ways they are many, the end it is one.

He that knocketh shall enter: who asks shall  
 obtain:

And who seeketh, he findeth. Remember,  
 Eugene!"

She turn'd to depart.

"Whither? whither?" . . . he said.

She stretched forth her hand where, already  
 outspread

On the darken'd horizon, remotely they saw

The French camp-fires kindling.

"See yonder vast host, with its manifold heart  
 Made as one man's by one hope! The hope  
 'tis your part

To aid toward achievement, to save from re-  
 verse:

Mine, through suffering to soothe, and through  
 sickness to nurse.

I go to my work: you to yours."

XXXVIII.

Whilst she spoke,  
 On the wide wasting evening there distantly  
 broke

The low roll of musketry. Straightway, anon,

From the dim Flag-staff Battery bellow'd a  
gun.

“Our chasseurs are at it!” he mutter'd.

She turn'd,  
Smiled, and pass'd up the twilight.

He faintly discern'd  
Her form, now and then, on the flat lurid sky  
Rise, and sink, and recede through the mists:  
by and by

The vapors closed round, and he saw her no  
more.

XXXIX.

Nor shall we. For her mission, accomplish'd,  
is o'er.

The mission of genius on earth! To uplift,  
Purify, and confirm by its own gracious gift,  
The world, in despite of the world's dull en-  
deavor

To degrade, and drag down, and oppose it for-  
ever.

The mission of genius: to watch, and to wait,  
To renew, to redeem, and to regenerate.

The mission of woman on earth! to give birth  
To the mercy of Heaven descending on earth.

The mission of woman: permitted to bruise  
The head of the serpent, and sweetly infuse,  
Through the sorrow and sin of earth's regis-  
ter'd curse,

The blessing which mitigates all: born to  
nurse,

And to soothe, and to solace, to help and to heal  
The sick world that leans on her. This was  
Lucile.

## XL.

A power hid in pathos: a fire veil'd in cloud:  
Yet still burning outward: a branch which,  
    though bow'd  
By the bird in its passage, springs upward  
again:  
Through all symbols I search for her sweet-  
ness—in vain!  
Judge her love by her life. For our life is but  
    love  
In act. Pure was hers; and the dear God  
    above,  
Who knows what His creatures have need of  
    for life,  
And whose love includes all loves, through  
    much patient strife  
Led her soul into peace. Love, though love  
    may be given  
In vain, is yet lovely. Her own native heaven  
More clearly she mirror'd, as life's troubled  
    dream  
Wore away; and love sigh'd into rest, like a  
    stream  
That breaks its heart over wild rocks toward  
    the shore  
Of the great sea which hushes it up evermore  
With its little wild wailing. No stream from  
    its source  
Flows seaward, how lonely soever its course,  
But what some land is gladden'd. No star  
    ever rose  
And set without influence somewhere. Who  
    knows  
What earth needs from earth's lowest creature?  
    No life

Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its  
strife

And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.  
The spirits of just men made perfect on high,  
The army of martyrs who stand by the Throne  
And gaze into the face that makes glorious  
their own,

Know this, surely, at last. Honest love, hon-  
est sorrow,

Honest work for the day, honest hope for the  
morrow,

Are these worth nothing more than the hand  
they make weary,

The heart they have sadden'd, the life they  
leave dreary?

Hush! the sevenfold heavens to the voice of  
the Spirit

Echo: He that o'ercometh shall all things in-  
herit.

XLI.

The moon was, in fire, carried up through the  
fog.

The loud fortress bark'd at her like a chain'd  
dog.

The horizon pulsed flame, the air sound. All  
without,

War and winter, and twilight, and terror, and  
doubt;

All within, light, warmth, calm!

In the twilight, longwhile  
Eugene de Luvois, with a deep, thoughtful  
smile,

Linger'd, looking, and listening, lone by the  
tent.

At last he withdrew, and night closed as he  
went.

THE END.



AUG 18 1900

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Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
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